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NB Moses





# HOTEP A DREAM OF THE NILE

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"Her checks Lossins and an ethereal beauty resting upon her. 1886, 147.

# HOTEP

# A DREAM OF THE NILE

BY

WILLIAM WILSHIRE MYERS

THE ROBERT CLARKE COMPANY
CINCINNATI

1905

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THE NEW YORK

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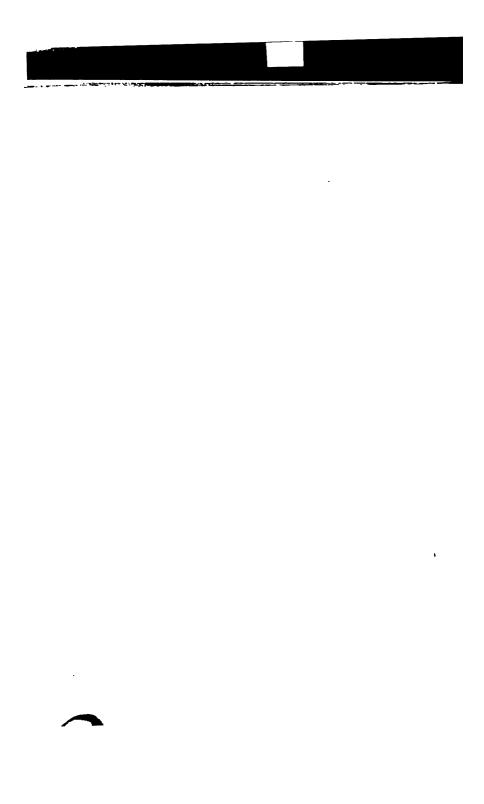
TO MY SISTER

Who believed that such things might be.

•			

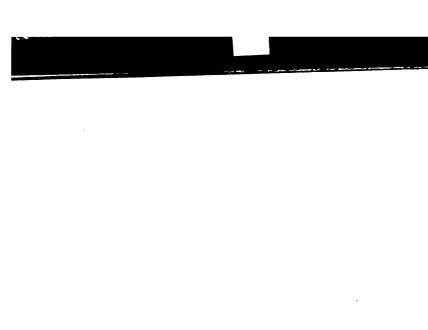
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Her cheeks glowing and an ethereal beauty resti	•
The Egyptian before me, I hate!	•
The secret of the Bride of the Nile is with me	
As he looked upon the painted face which seemed all	ive
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#### **FOREWORD**

GYPT still retains her ancient name, though standing amid the ruins of her former greatness, and shorn of her old time magnificence. The river Nile still waters her fields as in the days of the Shepherd Kings, but no hymn is now chanted for its bounteous gifts—no offerings made to its sacred character. Fertile acres, made famous in the times of the Pharaohs by their wealth of bloom and abundant fruitage, are still found in the valley of the great river, but the unique civilization that dwelt upon them, has long since passed into oblivion.

All is changed. Scientific research has brought to light a part of the life and progress of that ancient people, but the shroud of mystery still enwraps the "Land of Mizraim," and there rise from her Sphynxes, her Temples and her mummied host, the gibbering ghosts of tragedies, the restless spirits of disappointed ambitions, and the incense of loves long since forgotten. On all the actors in that ancient drama, who played their parts as then seemed best for them, the world has meted out its judgment. To those whose fortune it was to be cast in leading roles, it has granted the coveted wreath of fame;

while he who helped to bear the minor parts and made the great acts possible, has gone down

"To the vile dust from which he sprung, Unwept, unhonored and unsung."

As we stand before all that remains of the glory of those far off days, dreams of the mysterious past of the old nation steals softly over us: the mind conjures with the hieroglyphics that so hesitatingly disclose the secrets of her history; and the imagination builds with a strange infatuation, upon that which lies behind the partially lifted veil, that still hides much of her ancient splendor. The oriental magnificence that made brilliant the courts of her Pharaohs: the mechanical attainments that evolved and completed her Pyramids of stately grandeur: the aesthetic taste that produced her Obelisks of graceful beauty, and the barbaric instinct that made possible the human sacrifice of the Bride of the Nile: join themselves together in a weird. wild dance of an ever changing fantasy. about are the imperishable evidences of the realty of her former greatness, but the shadows of the ages fall darkly over those days—they flit like uneasy spirits across the musty pages of her history—and we dream on.

Chants and hymns on pages 62, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 162, 163 and 165 are extracts from translations in Rawlinson's Egypt.

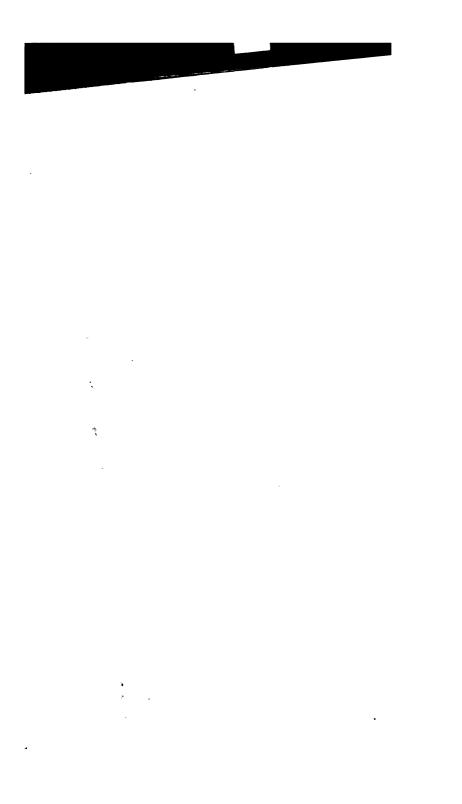
Dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and a touch of joy.
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our waking toils,
They do divide our being; they become
A portion of ourselves as of our time,
And look like heralds of sternity.

I would recall a vision which I dreamed Perchance in sleep—for in itself a thought, A slumbering thought, is capable of years, And curdles a long life into one hour.

-Lord Byron

# HOTEP A DREAM OF THE NILE

BOOK I



#### CHAPTER I.

#### A High Priest From Thebes.

"MILL wager my pet gazelle that Butan knows nothing of it."

"Be not too certain as to what he does not know. Butan hears much and tells but little."

"Ah! Snefru, it is like you to defend him, but do you know strange things are whispered in the ear at this time?"

"Very true, and Butan has an ear."

"Yes, yes, but so has Kakan ears, yet heard it not until he was told by me. It is said that Kakan hears what Butan knows, and that Snefru likewise shares the knowledge."

"You cannot believe all that rumor says. But no more of this—what secret do you carry with you?"

"Lord Nebka entertains to-night. A Theban High Priest will be his guest of honor."

"All Memphis knows that, and Nebka's generous hospitality is guarantee that his villa will be filled with guests."

"On that fact is based what I have heard. Is it not an easy thing for some to pass within the walls, whose presence would not be welcome? Does Apepi love the High Priest Hotep?"

"What has Pharaoh to do with either Lord Nebka or the High Priest?"

"Hearken, Snefru. Hotep comes direct from the Theban Prince Aahmes. We know he is not here in the interest of Pharaoh, and it is said the High Priest is this night in danger from paid emissaries of the court of Apepi."

"A mere rumor. It is not probable that Apepi would undertake to molest the High Priest, while the throne is so far removed from Memphis. Long since, his armies were withdrawn from our streets, and Avaris is now his capital. But there are things said that

warm the Egyptian blood in our veins. The brilliant victories of the Theban Prince in the south, have raised hopes in the hearts of all, from Memphis to the sea. Suppose that, following Hotep, the Prince Aahmes should conduct his forces north and engage this Hyksos ruler, the Pharaoh Apepi? Butan tells me that such a move is not improbable. Already, it is said, a rude message has been sent by Pharaoh to Aahmes and the answer is a practical declaration of war."

"All the more may we place some faith in this rumor of the danger now lurking near the High Priest."

"I do not think so. The Theban Prince is wise and has not placed Hotep here without protection. Apepi is a strong man who will not sit in Avaris and attempt to take prisoners in this far off city. Spies may be here from Pharaoh and also from Thebes, but

there will be no effort at this time to make any one captive."

The speakers found themselves suddenly jostled by a gathering crowd, and the sound of a tambourine warned them of an approaching procession. The multitudes along the street were more than usually demonstrative, and as the pageant drew near. Snefru and his companion also became deeply interested. The odor of incense, the bright flowers, and the banners attracted but little attention, nor did the delicately constructed boat upon the priests' shoulders, in which was carried the image of the god Tum, receive the homage that had beforetimes been awarded it. The eves of all were eager to look upon one particular group in the solemn and impressive pageant passing before them, and with excited yet whispered tones were heard the words "The High Priest, Hotep," "Lord Nebka and his guest."

Calmly and majestically the Theban High

Priest, dressed in all his robes of office, walked beside Nebka as the religious spectacle moved through the streets, while the throng pressing near, gazed admiringly on his stately form and noble face, paying him reverent and worshipful homage.

"Ah, this is in the usual style of Nebka—refined, elegant."

"With a surprise later on, I am told."

The speakers were a well known physician and his wife, who had just entered the reception hall as invited guests to Nebka's entertainment in honor of Hotep, the High Priest from Thebes.

"Memphis may well be proud of the young lord. The Theban Prince is not in any way his superior."

"I know, but look! Who is it Kakan brings! Those eyes—those jewels!"

The young lord, Kakan, had entered, accompanied by a woman whose rich dress was

adorned with brilliant gems, and whose dancing, dark eyes were looking saucily into his face as she murmured softly:

"It will be a treat you will enjoy. She is a celebrated dancer from Bubastis."

"I may not be so easily captivated as you think; but who is the coquette hiding behind the bright bouquet?"

Had he been nearer he could have heard the lady in question say simperingly to her escort: "Now don't deny it. We saw you from the roof as you sat in the garden with her. A fine lover you are."

The arrivals were now frequent and other fragments of conversation assisted in the hum of voices heard throughout the hall until the movement toward the main room began. Learned scribes, bright eyed belles and rich lords were mingled in the throng which, decorated with lotus bloom, adorned with garlands of roses and perfumed with unguents,

passed on to where the host and his noted guest awaited them.

There was a stately dignity about the High Priest that commanded immediate respect; a keen penetrating eye that marked him a shrewd observer of men; and a full, well modulated voice that fell upon the ear in soft, beguiling tones, attractive to all who heard it. As Lord Nebka, with his natural grace and suavity, presented his guests to the august visitor, they at once recognized in him one eminently fitted to stand behind the throne of Prince Ashmes, during the stirring events that all felt were about to occur. The sound of animated conversation soon began to fill the room, wine was daintily sipped and the musicians sang and played airs both grave and gay, as the interval passed until dinner should be served.

The "drink and be merry" command after the banquet seemed superfluous, and as the

dancers, jugglers, and female acrobats took their places, the hilarity increased until the young lord and Hotep were forgotten in the wild pleasure of the occasion.

In a private room away from all this gayety sat Nebka, the High Priest, Butan and Snefru in close conversation. The serious expression on their faces was evidence of the importance of the matter under consideration, and Hotep was speaking.

"I understand fully the eagerness you naturally feel in the presence of one just from the victories of Prince Aahmes. My Lord Nebka and his friends will remember, however, that a wise and prudent speech only is becoming in the High Priest of the temple. It may be that a shadow of disappointment will fall when I have said all that is proper for me to say at this time."

With a half smile he paused a moment and his face again assumed its thoughtful expression as he continued:

"That which is known in Thebes may without fear be told in Memphis. That which is
known to Aahmes and myself alone, it will be
well not to speak of until the Prince commands.
He has declared war on Apepi, the present
Pharaoh. His armies have started down the
Nile valley in boats, in chariots, on foot. He
feels that his late conquests in the south will
be repeated in the north, even to the overthrow
of Apepi. This is known in Thebes and
spoken of in Memphis."

Here the High Priest looked closely into their faces with the searching keenness of his black eyes as he continued with some show of emotion:

"But it is a long distance from Thebes to Avaris. There are many people whom Aahmes does not know, between him and the Shepherd King. Notwithstanding all this the Theban Prince undertakes, alone, to restore to Egypt her native dynasties. Does the Egyptian blood run warm in Memphian veins, or has it

become contaminated and sluggish by long contact with the usurping foreigners still ruling our land?"

The question came so unexpectedly and with such emphasis that for a moment all were silent. Then Snefru spoke animatedly and with great sincerity.

"He who speaks for all is not wise. I shall say only that which I know. There are those who, from generation to generation, have kept alive the glory that Egypt had before the coming of the hated Hyksos; and these will give of their houses, of their lands, yes, of their blood to its last drop, that the Shepherd King may be driven out forever."

With equal positiveness Butan also addressed the High Priest.

"The fields of Memphis are fair to look upon in times of peace. The Nile is covered with gaily colored boats bearing happy throngs when war stands afar. The love of

home, of friends and of fruitful years is but natural in the hearts of the people. But above all these there rises the desire for our nation's greatness and her freedom from the bondage of foreign rule. I speak that which I know, when I say that all who have held aloof from the usurpers' influence are willing to sacrifice the pleasures of peace for the good of Egypt, and have registered a solemn vow that the movement which Aahmes has inaugurated shall not fail for lack of help from them."

The face of Hotep lighted up with pleasure, as he listened to these words and turned inquiringly toward Nebka. The young lord spoke quickly and earnestly.

"These have testified to the things of their own knowledge and they have spoken truly. Not only at Memphis but at On and Bubastis do men speak excitedly of the great things that are soon to come upon us. The time is ripe for action—strike, and strike at once."

With a flash of warlike spirit the Theban's words came rapidly, while his voice fell almost to a whisper.

"Action has begun. Menethan has been to On and has reported all in readiness for the call of a leader, and a captain of the Prince will soon be on his way to organize the forces in that region. Everywhere, as the powerful army moves down from the south, men will be found ready and anxious to march under the banner of Aahmes. My journey from Thebes has been one of observation, with authority from the Prince to act as my judgment advised; and I have noted the public feeling and have assigned capable men to prepare the soldiery to join the forces now on the march. The time for work is short, the clash of arms will soon be heard about the capital city of the Shepherd King, and the great god Ammon will give to my Prince the victory. The Hyksos shall pass away and the Theban

will again establish the line of Egyptian Pharaohs."

Nebka poured wine into golden cups and with much enthusiasm they pledged themselves to assist Aahmes in the great work he had already begun. To Butan and Snefru, Hotep offered the task of organizing the troops at Memphis, and requested Nebka to take command of all the forces enlisted at Memphis and at On. When the conference closed, the High Priest had a strong faith in the success of the movement inaugurated at Thebes, while to Nebka and his friends the hope that the nation might be freed from the hated Hyksos rule that had dominated her for centuries, seemed about to be realized.

#### CHAPTER II.

# A Voice in the Night.

CLOWLY pushing back the curtain that for centuries had hidden the mysterious "Middle Empire" of Egypt, there was found, standing in the foreground, the towering form of Set, the great warrior leader of the Hittites. At the head of his army, he spread his barbaric power over the Nile valley, paralyzing the civilization, destroying the works of art and attacking the religion of Egypt, until all stood in danger of utter annihilation. Violence, coarseness and degradation were the features which seemed destined to be stamped upon this nation, as she bowed her head in submission to the "Hyksos" invaders, and the dynasties of the "Shepherd Kings" assumed the place allotted them on the page of history.

But the customs and the religion that had 16

been cherished by the Egyptian people through long ages, were too well established to be obliterated suddenly by such an onslaught, or to be entirely subverted by its after influence. On the contrary, as centuries rolled by under the Hittite occupancy, the Egyptian civilization re-acted upon the invaders, until their former rude and semi-savage character was modified to a more educated and polished habit. So it was that Apepi, the last one of these Hyksos rulers, was surrounded by a court closely imitating that of the Egyptian Pharaohs, and was a fairly civilized monarch in many respects. Art and science were at least partly encouraged, possibly to the extent of recovering some of the lustre that had been lost through the first rude attack, and doubtless a foundation had been established for the achievements of the brilliant dynasties that followed his dethronement.

But if Apepi was at this time about to pass
(2)
17

out of history as the last of the "Shepherd Kings," so too was his name linked with that of a new-born nation, which at the time of his downfall, was in its very infancy.

He it was, whose dreams had been so satisfactorily interpreted by Joseph, that the young Hebrew was taken from a prison to ride in Pharaoh's second chariot as overseer of the land. Afterward, when a famine was desolating the land of Canaan, and the Patriarch Jacob came down with his entire household, Apepi, this last Hyksos ruler, assigned to him one of the most fertile portions of his kingdom. Here, in the land of Goshen, dwelt Joseph's kinsmen, growing rich in flocks and herds and increasing in numbers under the protection of this Pharaoh.

If, then, the rumors of the approach of warlike hosts, with the possibility and perhaps the hope of the re-establishment of native rule, were occupying the attention of the Egyptians, there was also much of importance in

these movements, to the dwellers in the land of Goshen. To the Hebrews, came the constantly recurring question, "what shall we do?"

They had known but one Pharaoh. conquering armies had often been seen returning from victory, proudly bringing in their spoils; but now, these same hosts were seen daily passing along the roads leading to Avaris, hurriedly and with empty hands, as though driven in by some power not to be withstood. If the years of prosperity and quiet, which had been so long theirs to enjoy, had led them unconsciously to a forgetfulness of possible danger, the reports of the approach of Prince Aahmes with an ever increasing force, and the drawing in of all Apepi's troops to his capital city, was a rude reminder of the actual situation. This Pharaoh, who had always been their friend might soon be shorn of his power forever, and if Apepi should be driven out and the Theban

Prince placed upon the throne, how would it then be with them?

As they meditated day after day on the change that seemed imminent, and looked back on the years of peace and prosperity that had been theirs through the kindly old Pharaoh, now being shut up in Avaris, the question persistently presented itself—"what shall we do?"

One night in the council of the Hebrew princes, when the trend of the conversation brought out a remark as to the length of time they might remain in undisturbed possession of the fertile fields of Goshen, the discussion broadened until an expression of opinion, in regard to their duty toward Apepi, seemed forced upon them in such a way as to permit of no escape. There was, however, no desire shown by any, to be first in advocating a positive position on the question, and it was with ambiguous words and querulous tone that Ohad began:

"We have dwelt in safety under Pharaoh these many years. We have seen his armies go out to battle, but never until now have we seen them returning empty handed and without captives. Is not his power decaying and one stronger than he driving him? May not the same strong hand smite us also, if so be that we take any part in this trouble?"

Then Kohath with like uncertainty of manner said:

"We are but few in numbers, and counted as naught in this land. Shall we put ourselves forward without a cause? Shall we lose our flocks and herds and endanger our present freedom, when Apepi asks not for help? Let Pharaoh fight as seems best to him, but as for us, we have no war."

During these remarks so guardedly spoken and yet so evidently opposed to assisting Pharaoh, Ben Ammi, one of the foremost of the Council, regarded the two speakers with a peculiar, half astonished, half contemptuous

look. It was commonly understood that he was strongly inclined to favor offering their services to Apepi, but in this he stood practically alone. In all their discussions as they went about their daily tasks, no one had felt disposed to advocate openly and positively a policy of opposition to Pharaoh, nor had any one, except Ben Ammi, intimated anything like a willingness to offer his small assistance. A negative policy was plainly the most popular as was shown in the remarks just made before the Council, and Haggi now rose and continued:

"No more are the friends of Pharaoh found in the streets of Memphis; no more in On is his name mentioned as among the gods. But everywhere the people await the coming of the Theban, that they may join against Apepi. Shall we offer ourselves to Pharaoh and stand as against our neighbors about us, or shall we remain quietly in the land of Goshen, that our future may be more secure?"

At these words Ben Ammi sprang to his feet, his eyes shining brightly in response to the spirit that stirred within him. His face paled a little under the suppressed excitement that gave an expression of determination to his every word and gesture.

"Not far back in our history a father's favorite son was sold into Egypt by his brethren. A coat dipped in blood was laid before the lad's father, whose head was bowed in grief that the wild beasts had destroyed his loved one. Ye have not forgotten it—nor do ye forget that the God of our fathers was with the young man, even our kinsman, Joseph.

"A Pharaoh raised up that Joseph who had been so rudely torn from his tribe and his country, and gave him great power and was kind unto him. Afterward when the famine came upon us in the land of Canaan, and we sent down into Egypt to buy corn, that Pharaoh welcomed our

father Jacob and all our families to this land which has been so fruitful unto us. We came to him lean and hungry and he placed before us a great abundance. For these many years we have lived quietly and grown rich under the protection of that Pharaoh, even he who is now besieged at Avaris. No opportunity has offered before, whereby we might by some act as noble as his, make return for all his goodness toward us. Enemies are now gathering about him. The chariots and horsemen are closing in upon his fortified capital. He who saved us and our little ones from the famine, stands up to fight, perchance to die, yet makes no plea to us for help. In the greatness of his soul he turns not to say to us, 'this did I for you,' as if expecting somewhat in return. Freely has he given—with a mighty hand has he saved us cowards are we, all of us, if we do not accept this opportunity and save him if we can, or die with him if we must."

The impetuosity of his speech and the appeal to their higher nature, made such an impression upon the Council that for a few moments all were silent. Then was heard a voice floating out upon the night air, sounding as from afar off and yet each word falling upon the ear as distinctly as though the speaker stood near by.

"Hear ye the words of the Lord God as He speaks through the mouth of His servant Saleel. Hear ye His words and do after His commandments. Apepi has served the purpose for which he has been created and he shall be cast down; he shall be cut off forever."

There was something in the tone as well as in the surroundings, that added to the effect of the words just spoken, and from the council room was heard the voice of one reverently speaking.

"It is a long time since God spoke to us through the words of man. Saleel, we know,

is not one of the Princes; but that he has been raised up to prophesy in the name of the Lord God, should make us hearken unto him."

Again the penetrating, thrilling tones were heard, solemn and distinct.

"The Prince from the south shall pursue him. The bowmen and the spearmen shall come up against him. He shall be brought low, saith the Lord."

At this, Heber rose in the midst of them, and with the fervor born of faith, presented his views in the simple words:

"If the Lord our God be against Pharaoh, should not we be found on the side of God?"

Ben Ammi made instant reply.

"Why should we say that the Lord God is against Pharaoh? Who is this Saleel that he should proclaim himself a Prophet of God among the tents of the Hebrews? As his wish is, so is his prophecy. He lusteth for the land of Canaan. Let him again get himself to that land if he will, but let us not turn

away from Apepi. Pharaoh stood for us in a time of great trouble and we—"

Here the voice in the night interrupted.

"Hear ye the Lord by the mouth of His servant. Rise up, my people, and get ye out of this land, for there shall come a new Pharaoh who knows not Joseph, and he will in no wise spare thee."

There was no uncertainty in the tone; the words came with the positiveness of conscious authority and as they died away, the members of the Council quietly departed.

As the days passed, during which the coming of Prince Aahmes was awaited, anxiety increased among the Hebrews, and a presentiment of coming doom seized them as they heard every night, throughout the land of Goshen, the solemn cry:

"Hear ye the Lord! Rise up, and get ye out of this land."

Ben Ammi, alone, left home and kindred to fight in the army of the old Pharaoh.

#### CHAPTER III.

The Spirit of Set.

7AR has about it a certain pomp and glory that is so attractive as to partially hide its hideousness. Even though the plumes and tinsel of gorgeous uniforms, the inspiring tones of military bands and the shrill call fife, be wanting, yet the beating of tomtoms, the carrying of rude weapons and the movement in drilled divisions answer practically the same purpose among the people of less advanced nations. Whether the standard of a brigade be of colored silk, waiving in graceful folds at the head of the column, or whether it be some heathen idol carried upon a rough pole by half dressed barbarians, those who follow it in either case, feel the same pride in advancing it to victory, and as gladly die in protecting it.

In all ages of the world and among all its people, there is evidence that the inborn love of country, the natural tendency to hero worship, the quick response to martial strains and the glamour of victory and undying fame, conspire to paint the warrior's life in such glowing colors as to make the horrors of war sink into insignificance. Looking out over the contest, and able to see both the glory and the sorrow belonging naturally to the clashing of arms, are strong men; yes, and loving women, whose silent prayers before the conflict, whose shudder of dread, as reports reach them after the struggle, and whose drapings of sorrow, testifying to the stroke that fell so mercilessly upon them, are all lost to sight and forgotten in the outbursts of applause and the tossing of the victor's wreath, that greet the returning heroes.

Yes, truly war has its brighter side—an attractiveness that makes it possible to recruit the ranks of those who rally about their

standards with unbounded enthusiasm, and march away to battle—perhaps to death.

It was this spirit which animated the contending forces in that great struggle which took place at Avaris, in far away Egypt, centuries before the Christian era. Notwithstanding the discouraging reports that were daily arriving, of immense armies marching against him, the Shepherd King wrapped himself in all the dignity his high position demanded, and fearlessly prepared to meet his enemies. When his chariot appeared on the streets he rode in all the pomp and magnificence of an oriental ruler, with all the calmness of a Pharaoh secure on his throne, and with an air of supreme confidence that was inspiring.

With his kingly escort he visited the several encampments of his army, noted carefully the preparations for the defense of the city, and looked with a warrior's eye upon the manning of the walls, the repairing of

fortifications and the exercising of troops, until his presence instilled his own spirit into every soldier, and the drill practice reached almost the enthusiasm of a charge on the field of battle.

The erstwhile gentle ruler of a peaceful land was transformed into the soldier hero, and the martial spirit was instantly born in those around him, as the dark war cloud gathered over the valley. The barbaric strain of blood once more became dominant in the Shepherd King; the Hyksos birth rose above the Egyptian civilization, and the spirit of the great Set entered into Apepi, as he stood endowed with all the strength of purpose and all the personal magnetism that had, centuries before, drawn the ancient Hittites around his mighty ancestor, to conquer and to rule. Drums were beaten. trumpets blown, standards adorned with figures of their gods were carried high, and the pomp of war held dominion in Avaris, as

more than two hundred thousand armed men looked forward to the glory which they felt was in store for them.

But all this had its counterpart elsewhere. Down the Nile in boats, and spreading out over the valley on foot and in chariots, came the army of the Theban Prince, with all the confidence begotten of conquests lately made in the south; chanting the glorious deeds of Aahmes, their great leader; and with pennants flying gaily over forces that were constantly increasing in numbers. As far as eye could reach, the plains were covered with the serried hosts, while from every mountain side the golden standards glistened in the sun. The champing of horses, the rumbling of wheels, the hoarse commands, all assisted in building up that feeling of invincibility which is ever a part of a conquering force. They marched with the buoyant and enthusiastic spirit that makes men fear no obstacles, and transports them to a state where

the paeans of victory already sound in their ears.

The crisis was approaching.

In a short time the halo that enveloped both the city camp of the Shepherd King and the marching troops of Aahmes, would be dissipated by the realities of the death struggle which would bring to one the stigma of defeat, and to the other the glory that hides from sight the price at which it is bought.

. . . . . .

Before the gates of Avaris the Theban Prince with an army numbering double that of Apepi, covered the plains with camps, and the lakes and canals with boats, while those within the walls felt for the first time the overshadowing of a power bent upon their destruction.

Then Apepi strode from the Imperial Court, and mounted his chariot as calmly as though it were but another visit to the camp drills. But his weapons were at his side, his

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armor-bearer carried the royal shield on his sturdy arm as he managed the spirited horses, and the princely escort rode beside him in battle array. With no trace of anxiety upon his brow, the old Pharaoh stood defiantly erect in his battle car, while each member of the guard that rode proudly with him, seemed to have caught the spirit of his leader; and as they thus traversed the lines of defense, depression gave way to hope; enthusiasm warmed to courage; and those who manned the walls cheered as the first flight of arrows from the Theban's army fell short of its intended destination.

Then followed the scenes over which the curtain is usually drawn, only to be parted occasionally to exhibit some feat of extraordinary courage and daring, or some thrilling tableau of plumes, standards and glittering spears. It is enough to say that fearless attacks upon the fortifications, brilliant sorties from the garrison and start-

ling acts of personal bravery, stood out in bold relief during the long days and nights through which the conflict continued.

Then came the end.

The Shepherd King was doomed—Avaris fell—Egypt was restored to native rule.

Ben Ammi had cast his lot with Apepi, and on more than one occasion he had proven his great prowess, as the tide of battle surged madly around him. Pharaoh had seen the gallant bearing of his Hebrew recruit and had made public recognition of it by advancing him to positions of trust and responsibility. But when at the close of a hard day's fighting, the last charge of the hosts of Aahmes put everything to confusion, and the din and excitement of retreat was augmented by the shouts and rushing of the victors, Ben Ammi was separated from his companions in arms, and forced, by the crush of retreating and panic-stricken detachments, into the col-

umned entrance of a gateway, which was set deep into a garden wall and securely fastened on the inside. Here he paused to consider the situation, and three others, who recognized the gallant soldier whom it had pleased Pharaoh to honor, joined him in the semiprotected position, just as a young woman with disarranged apparel, and panting from exertion, staggered toward the spot. Hurriedly she was passed behind the little force, as a matter of safety for her and of convenience to themselves, for, but a short distance away, a detachment of Lord Nebka's division was pressing forward impetuously. In sheer desperation the mass of Pharaoh's retreating soldiers turned suddenly upon their Egyptian pursuers, and one of the many vicious, though short lived struggles of that eventful day was precipitated about the refuge of the Hebrew and his companions. Numbers, and the confidence of victory were, however, on the side of the Egyptians, and again began the on-

ward rush of the defeated, in the hope of escape through the coming darkness. A part of the attacking force turned aside to wage unequal battle with the little group discovered about the gateway. But she who had sought protection with these few, was now recovered from the effect of her efforts to obtain shelter, and a new impulse sent the blood coursing rapidly, and made the hearts throb courageously in the men who stood about her. Instantly she too grew to a warrior's stature, and as one of the three who had joined Ben Ammi fell with an arrow through his heart, she sprang for his weapons, and with shield uplifted and spear tightly grasped, took her place beside the Hebrew. Another minute and there remained but two-Ben Ammi and the woman. He sprang between her and the enemy as fearlessly as though a division stood at his back, but before he could strike in her defense, he was borne down by numbers and both were led away captive.

#### CHAPTER IV.

An Adventure in the Camp.

ANY days elapsed before Aahmes returned to Thebes.

Among the few prisoners to be carried south, were Ben Ammi and the he had undertaken to befriend: both of whom, by the influence of Nebka and Hotep, had been attached household of Aahmes. They had thus been thrown more closely together than might otherwise have been the case, but neither had yet ventured more than a mere recognition. From the night when the torches at Nebka's headquarters had shown her to Ben Ammi as a beautiful Hittite maiden, whose dress and courtly manner indicated that she belonged to the highest class, he had admired her, as one might who had no thought of ever possessing her. So too, the intelligence and

evident manliness of the Hebrew, had impressed the Hittite maiden to such an extent that a comparison of him with those of his kinsmen whom she had met between Memphis and Avaris, was greatly in his favor, and yet she had not been touched with a feeling of even friendship toward him. Indeed there was nothing in the characters of these two captives that could develop that gushing emotion sometimes called love, which is so often said to come at first sight, and which is not infrequently laid aside with as much ease as it is acquired. The blood of a herdsman of the plain, begat in Ben Ammi the sturdy, forceful ideas of manhood; and in the Hittite maiden flowed the wild and passionate blood of a barbarous ancestry. To the Hebrew, to love meant to always stand between his fair one and danger, to sacrifice comfort and convenience for her sake, to lay down his life rather than harm should come to her, and yet to stand firmly in the belief

that he was at all times entitled to that respect which the dignity of manhood should receive. To the Hittite, to love was to demand as her ideal, the incarnation of power, fearlessness and loyalty, and to embrace that ideal with all the impetuosity of a ferocious longing, which once repulsed, would lead to bitter hate.

Hotep had just concluded a brief consultation with Aahmes, as the blasts of trumpets and hoisting of standards proclaimed the forward movement, and looking out over the retinue of the new Pharaoh his eyes fell upon Ben Ammi and the Hittite maiden.

Standing a little apart from those about them, they had turned a last look on the fields and groves, about which clustered all the pleasant recollections of their lives. To the Hebrew there came sweet memories of the quiet and happy days in Goshen, that would return no more; but no outward appearance gave token of the tumult of emotion that was

surging through him. And as the Hittite looked earnestly down the road that led into Syria, and realized that all her people had but shortly ago escaped that way and were lost to her forever, there was no change of expression to indicate the longing desire and the feeling of isolation that for a moment sickened her heart. Like a proud princess of an unconquered line, she stood looking afar as Hotep's eyes lighted upon her, and then turned to Ben Ammi, who instinctively withdrew a pace and waited respectfully. Looking at him with that intensity which evidenced the firm determination that now controlled her, she said without any show of emotion:

"Life opens anew for us. So far, neither birth nor rank avail anything. As prisoners we are on an equality. The daughter of a Pharaoh places her trust in a brave soldier."

With a scarcely perceptible start at the announcement of her identity so abruptly

made, Ben Ammi bowed as reverently as though Apepi still reigned, and replied firmly:

"The princess has made no mistake. As I offered my life for Pharaoh, even so I now offer it for you. Command and I obey."

"It is spoken like a true subject of my father. I am not unthankful. A stranger comes."

The Hebrew turned to find Hotep approaching and already quite near where they stood. As the High Priest paused before him, the soul of Ben Ammi for a moment stood in rebellion; but when in his full, soft tones, and with his dignified yet friendly manner, Hotep greeted him, he felt unaccountably drawn toward the High Priest.

"The battle has gone against the Hebrew," said Hotep, "but a brave soldier always respects the courage of his enemy. Prince Aahmes has overthrown Pharach, but his heart is not hardened against the Hebrew

whom he has captured. It is hard for you to leave behind all that is most dear to you, yet your calling should prepare you for such a trial. Hotep, who now speaks to you, would be your friend."

The Hittite maiden who had just declared herself to be the daughter of Apepi, was attracted by the gentle manner of Hotep, and almost unconsciously drew closer as he spoke. The High Priest turned to her with a respectful reserve of manner, yet with an expression of fatherly concern softly beaming from his eyes, and continued:

"The camp life is rude and the march will be wearying. The Hittite maiden will not find the comfort to which she has been accustomed, and sorrow must come. But I can see by the clear, bright eye and resolute mouth, that she will not give way to useless grief, in the trouble that has fallen like a shadow upon her. Hotep is the friend of the maiden."

With grateful hearts they listened to these

words of the High Priest, for each realized that if so great a man as he should interest himself in their behalf, they might in their captivity, escape the annoyance of petty serfdom and perhaps cherish the hope of a restoration to freedom. Yet, to Ben Ammi came the thought that as the Theban Prince was the enemy of Pharaoh, whom he loved, so too must be his High Priest; and he refrained from manifesting any particular pleasure at the words of Hotep.

"The battle has indeed gone against me," said Ben Ammi, "but I go to my fate as one who feels that he has done his duty; not hopeless, and without fear. The hand of God is in it all."

Hotep looked at him earnestly before replying, and then said quietly:

"You will be as a stranger in the land to which you are going. When the days of reflection come, you will think better of me and then you will turn to me. I have been im-

pressed by your manly bearing and by the modest heroism of the Hittite—I have spoken as my heart dictated—Hotep returns to his place."

They watched the High Priest as he left them and passed among the now moving forces, but doubt still whispered in the ear of the Hebrew as he respectfully addressed the maiden.

"What think you of the great Hotep?"

"A noble man, although aiding in the downfall of my father, Apepi. I have heard of him at our court, and he is wise in the minds of even his enemies. A faithful adviser of the new Pharaoh—a man beloved by the poor."

"Was he drawn to speak, think ye, because a princess stood before him? And if for that alone, he condescended to treat me also with consideration, is there nothing to fear at his hands?"

The Hittite looked fixedly into the Hebrew's face as she replied:

"Hotep cannot know me, unless he who stands beside me betrays me. He cannot harm me, except the protestations of loyalty so lately spoken were but words."

"Pardon, Princess! He who speaks will never betray; he who promised will always defend."

With a slight inclination of the head for reply, she walked on quietly, and both began to feel the stern reality of the captive's life now opening before them.

That night, after the camp was pitched, Aahmes strolled through the imperial quarters. His eyes sought out the Hittite as she sat among others of his household slaves, and at a distance he paused, to look more closely on the fair prisoner. He had been attracted before by the graceful form and comely features of the maiden, but now she seemed to have put on a greater beauty as she sat among the dull faces about her, and as he looked upon her

attentively for the first time, he was aware that he had by no means placed a proper estimate on her attractiveness. Her gentler breeding, richer garments, and intelligent countenance had from the beginning marked her as belonging to the higher class; but tonight there was the graceful movement, the queenly air, and the indescribable individuality which forced him to acknowledge that she might be of royal blood. As he began to realize that this captive was possibly his equal by birth, and that her beauty and grace were growing upon him as he looked, he found also that his inclination to move from the court was less strong—that it was a pleasure to be near her.

"Let the King beware," came in a soft voice at his side, and turning, Aahmes found Hotep looking earnestly into his face.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Will the King come with me?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why does the great Hotep speak to me now?"

"Shall I prophesy before Pharaoh, and in this place? The god Ammon has spoken to me; Ammon Ra is like unto the sun; he lighteth up the dark places."

Silently the two passed out into the night.

#### CHAPTER V.

### An Attempt that Failed.

OUR days of the journey were past and night was again falling. Tired feet were willing to rest, and even the guard seemed less alert than at the first. The monotonous and wearying march was having its effect upon the two captives who moved with Aahmes' retinue, and who, under the stress of surrounding conditions were drawn, half unconsciously, nearer to each other. Ben Ammi had noticed the entrance of Ashmes to the servants' quarters on the first night after leaving Avaris, and had also witnessed his conversation and sudden departure with the High Priest. That night he rested uneasily, and fretted himself between the short intervals of unrefreshing sleep, with thoughts of the Hittite. Resolutions were made which should be carried out the next day, looking to-

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ward the establishment of a more friendly acquaintance with the maiden, but when the day dawned and the hosts again moved onward, he walked as before and spoke not to the Hittite of the vague misgivings that had entered his mind. And she, looking upon him daily in his strength and manly beauty, and noting his watchful care lest any task or burden might fall too heavily upon her, was moved at times to throw off her reserve and learn more of this man, whom she began to look upon as something more than merely a hired soldier. But as the days passed, she opened not her mouth to him of the things she had promised herself to say.

On this fourth night they stood near each other. The reserve that naturally belonged to one, as a Princess in the presence of her subject; and the deference due to royalty, which the other as a true soldier fully recognized, seemed gradually dissolving under some in-

describable power that now compelled them to mutual confidences. Their eager eyes flashed each to the other a message which the tongue had refused to tell, and the barrier between them was broken down—the past gave way to the exigencies of the present—the Hittite maiden spoke.

"I salute my father's friend. I welcome one who has promised to be my defender."

"I bow with pleasure before my Princess and am ready to serve her."

"Say not so. My rank is gone forever, and we are but captives together."

"And still I bow before you, feeling that my duty to Apepi would not be faithfully performed otherwise."

"The Hebrew has my thanks, and I respect him for his kind expression toward my father; but let us speak of the things that lie immediately before us. The farther we go from Avaris, the less cause have we for hope."

"To me it matters little where we go. If the Princess has aught to say, it shall be my pleasure to listen."

"My thoughts turn back to my own people and my desire is strong to go to them. Do you think we could escape from the camp?"

"The chance to get away will hardly offer, and yet an opportunity might occur. The guard is not so closely kept as in the beginning."

"I have felt so strongly that some way would be opened for us to obtain freedom again, that I am now moved to act in the hope of success. In truth I am ready to try this night for liberty, while all are fatigued and will sleep soundly. I know the great danger to you, and perhaps I should not speak of having you join me,—yet I dare not go alone. Pause before you answer me, for this is what it means: if we are taken again, I will be brought back to the camp alive; but you—"

She watched keenly the expression on Ben

Ammi's face, and a radiance of joy shone from her eyes as she read his words before they were uttered.

"My life is thine. If danger comes to you, who but a soldier of Pharaoh should be your protector. I go where you desire, and count not the cost."

"Not so would I have it," she exclaimed impetuously. "A life for a life. I accept yours in this undertaking only on condition that mine shall be taken in exchange. Together we go to life or death. If we get not away, and your life should pay the forfeit, the hosts of Aahmes will not carry the Hittite Princess alive to Thebes."

"I am indeed proud to be thus honored by the daughter of Apepi, and shall always try to be worthy of your esteem. Do not, however, place such a condition on this service as shall make me hesitate to enter into it. If you have considered well the dangers and possible con-

sequences of this attempt to flee, I am ready to assist you."

"I have carefully considered—I desire to go."

"Let us pass this way, which seems at present unobstructed."

Quietly and unobserved they stepped beyond the feeble light that now but poorly illumined the imperial quarters, and soon stood at the edge of the camp.

"Yonder but a short distance lies the land of Goshen." So Ben Ammi spoke. "My people are there, and therefore in that place will Ashmes first look to find us. Far away to the right we shall find the road to Syria. Command me."

"The home of the Princess should be with her people."

"It is well said-I lead the way."

Slowly and cautiously they stole from the camp, and felt already that they were beyond immediate discovery, when two unarmed

soldiers emerged from a clump of undergrowth directly in their way. The Hebrew, noticing that one wore the dress of an officer of the Imperial Escort, knew at once that they were not a part of the camp guard. A suspicion that the interruption of his flight was of a personal nature, and not by authority, was strengthened as the officer addressed them.

"What have we here? Lovers walking beneath the stars? The soft air soothes with its caresses. The atmosphere of love is all about us. It would be an easy matter to love, at any time, such beauty as it is now my pleasure to look upon."

The voice was low, the tone insulting, and in the dim light the Hebrew saw the sensuous leer that accompanied the words, and revealed the lecherous heart of the man before him. A full appreciation of the trust reposed in him by the Hittite Princess swept over him, and his duty as her protector, standing out prominently before him, called forth all that

was brave and manly in his soul. Without hesitation he attacked the officer, but the well aimed blow was intercepted by the soldier, who rushed upon Ben Ammi, hoping to overpower him by assailing him unexpectedly. Hebrew was not taken unawares by this sudden assault, and as his opponent warded the blow intended for the officer. Ben Ammi partly prepared himself for the grapple that instantly followed. Again, as in those days of combat at Avaris, the muscles of the Hebrew became like iron. Again the indomitable courage that won him Apepi's favor took complete possession of him. The daughter of Apepi needed his assistance now, more than his Pharaoh had ever needed it, and with one mighty, concentrated effort he lifted the Egyptian from the ground and hurled him in the air. It was all done so quickly that the other had not moved and Ben Ammi now turned upon him fearlessly. With that brutal courage, which comes from the knowledge of an overpowering ad-

vantage, the officer drew a short, stiletto-like sword from its concealment beneath the folds of his tunic, and viciously assumed the offensive. The eye of the Hebrew caught the faint shimmer of the weapon in the moonlight, and seizing the uplifted arm in his vise-like grasp. he dealt his enemy a powerful blow that felled him to the ground. Wrenching the sword from the officer's hand, Ben Ammi caught him by the throat as he attempted to rise, and, forcing him to his knees, raised the weapon to plunge it into his heart. The soldier who had now recovered from the stunned condition produced by his violent fall at the hands of the Hebrew, rushed to the rescue of his companion; but the Hittite threw herself quickly between him and the combatants, hoping to hold him in check until Ben Ammi should strike the fatal blow which would insure his final victory. Only a second of time stood between life and death for the officer, when a

calm, commanding voice uttered the one word
--"Hold!"

Hotep stood before them.

For an instant all the participants in the struggle seemed carved from stone, so motionless did they occupy the positions in which the command of the High Priest reached them. Then gradually the tension relaxed, the uplifted arm descended slowly, and the silence was broken by Hotep as he bent his disapproving look upon the officer.

"How is it that one in your position appears in this place at such a time? The duties of the Escort lie not among the guards of the camp. The protection of Pharaoh is best performed where Pharaoh is. It rests with me whether your head shall not fall on the morrow. If, after consultation with the god Ammon, I desired to draw hither the captives, not even Aahmes would gainsay me. Yet you, who dare not command the veriest slave of the household of Pharaoh, have placed yourself as opposing

me. Go back to your places, both of you, and do you but breathe of this, you shall answer with your lives."

As the officer and his companion disappeared in the darkness Hotep turned to Ben Ammi and the Hittite.

There was a short silence in which they could feel their hearts beating wildly. As the Hittite turned to her companion with an expression of determination that could not be misunderstood, and Ben Ammi knitted his strong muscles to strike down the High Priest and continue the flight, Hotep spoke calmly and softly, while his manner of conscious superiority overcame the wild resolve of the captives.

"The Hebrew did not consult the God of Abraham before he started from the camp, nor did the maiden advise with Sutech, the god of the Hittite. The mind of Hotep was lighted by communication with Ammon Ra. Follow me."

He moved away slowly a few paces and stopped, remaining with his back toward them. The Hittite blood rebelled and the Hebrew's antipathy controlled him. For a minute neither moved, nor was a word spoken. Then silently Ben Ammi took the hand of the Princess and together they went forward as in a dream, while Hotep led the way.

They soon reached the open place in the camp, where stood the altar before which the armed host worshipped, and near which stood a few rude seats. At a sign from the High Priest they occupied two that were near each other, while he sat on a third which he placed directly in front of them. His manner was so quiet and persuasive, without the least appearance of displeasure or undue authority, that they resigned themselves to his will without hesitation; but it was not long until there seemed to be some all-pervading influence about them, that made the words of Hotep of extraordinary effect. All the magic art that

had come down to him from one generation to another as a part of his priestly inheritance, was drawing them more and more under his control, and the power of prophecy, attaching to him as one of a long line of high priests, gave emphasis to all that he now said to them.

"You have fled from Aahmes in the blindness of your hearts, that you might be put in the way to hear what I have to tell. While a part of it shall be hidden from your understanding, that which is plain to you must be for your good. The great god Ammon looks farther than the High Priest. He knows."

His dark eyes were looking into their souls;—the stillness of the night grew oppressive to them. Hotep arose and moved toward the altar, and as Ben Ammi and the maiden gazed in wonder, mixed with superstitious awe, the figure of the Sun God seemed to bow in recognition to the priest before it. The rising moon brought out the features of Hotep in stronger lines, and lighted up his face with a

saintly glow, as he reverently chanted in a voice scarcely audible:

"Come to me, O thou Sun, Horus of the horizon, Give me help."

For a few moments he stood with upturned face as though supplementing his chanted prayer with another made in silence, and then returned to his seat, holding his listeners in almost breathless silence.

"A vision passes before me. The palace of Aahmes is opened to a stranger and the Queen stands ready to receive her. A Hittite maiden makes her home with Ne-fert-ari, the beautiful Queen. The temple at Thebes awaits the coming of its High Priest, and a Hebrew enters with Hotep, as an offering from Aahmes to Ammon Ra

"The vision changes and becomes less distinct. In the dimness the Nile waters are gathering and a bride for the sacred river is to be selected. Pharaoh's household is dis-

turbed and the Queen is at the feet of Aahmes. Trouble weighs upon the Hebrew—sorrow walks beside the Hittite.

"The vision becomes more and more obscured. Through the misty veil that hides it, the High Priest is seen pleading before the altar in the great temple,—boats float upon the surging waters of the river,—Osiris claims his own and black darkness falls around."

Hotep paused. A look of sadness overspread his face while his eyes looked sorrowfully into theirs. He had spoken slowly, and as the words fell softly and distinctly upon their ears, they sank deeply into their minds. A brief part of the near future had been laid before them, or the High Priest was a dreamer. Ben Ammi never doubted that God had spoken to his forefather, Abraham; might he not at this time have spoken to the High Priest of Egypt? The Hittite had seen the divining bowl consulted and its hidden mysteries revealed. Might not the Sun God on the altar

have whispered now in the ears of Hotep of things to come? As they sat utterly bewildered, thinking of the strange scene and its incomprehensible actor, their rising hopes blasted and their future already darkened by the words which they felt were prophetic, the High Priest again spoke:

"Osiris dwells in the place of the dead. To him all go, that they may serve their time of expiation and renewing. Does the Hebrew know of this?"

"I have so heard from the priests at On."

"These years being accomplished, the soul returns to abide again in the haunts of men. Does the Hittite believe it so?"

"The daughter of Apepi believes it not," said the maiden.

"I know the truth is hidden from many, but the gods govern all things. In the years to come, far, far in the future, you will stand on this spot again together. Not as it now is, will you then find it. Egypt, in that day

will have no Pharaoh to rule over her as now; the foot of another nation will be upon her neck—desolation will sit in her high places. The years with Osiris will have been fulfilled and you shall stand here with Hotep even as you now stand, knowing each other and knowing me. Let us return to our places."

The High Priest led the way to the imperial quarters.

From behind the altar emerged a form, and the officer of the Imperial Escort stood looking in the direction they had taken.

"What this may mean I cannot tell. I counted myself favored when I saw the Hebrew leave the camp with the maiden. I would lie in wait for them, and him I would slay. Before Aahmes I would appear with the maiden and say, I slew the Hebrew as he attempted to escape, and Pharaoh would give to me the fair one. But now my life depends on silence. Hotep has laid his command upon me—all has failed; I do not understand."

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#### CHAPTER VI.

#### The Beautiful Ne-fert-ari.

ROM the time Aahmes entered upper Egypt until he reached Thebes, the usual greetings to a victorious monarch were accorded him at the several cities and villages. Hands held aloft with shouts of praise, palms waved as his chariot passed, and bouquets of flowers showered upon him, expressed the congratulations of the populace as with kingly pomp he rode onward, while behind him followed a file of Hittite prisoners. When the Capital was reached the enthusiasm was doubled as Ashmes with his conquering host swept through the streets toward the temple, there to offer up to Ammon Ra the products of the Northland, and to turn over to the priests such prisoners as were destined to become slaves in the Temple service.

The Hittite Princess and Ben Ammi, who remained under the care of an officer of the household, were conveyed to the palace, and the Princess was, in a few days, assigned as one of the women in waiting on the Queen: while the Hebrew was held among the men servants, awaiting a decision by Aahmes in regard to a suggestion of Hotep as to his future. Many times, since the night in which their escape had been prevented by the High Priest, Ben Ammi and the Hittite had availed themselves of opportunities for brief conversation, and each time the bond of union between them grew stronger, until the feeling of confidence and respect that had governed them from the first, welled up into a true and all controlling love.

A week passed within the palace walls, and then came a day when the Queen was gracious, and the Hittite, at her suggestion, decided to visit the temple. She passed to



the street and had barely left the palace grounds when Ben Ammi approached her.

"Ah," said she, "I am glad to see you again. Where have they placed you?"

"Within the palace for the present."

"I heard one of the Queen's retinue say that a prisoner was among the men servants, but I hardly dared to think it was you."

"I knew my fair one was here among the Queen's women, but the uncertainty that seems to hang over my destination, forbade me hoping to remain near you long. From some of the servants I have heard that my name has been mentioned to Aahmes by Hotep, and of course all are expecting me to leave the palace. The Temple is where I shall finally be placed, if these be right in their suppositions."

"Then you may be under Hotep. I feel that he is our friend, and yet I shudder when I recall the prophecy that fell from his lips as we sat by the altar in the camp. I am go-

ing now to the Temple to see him before his god in the service there."

"I, too, am going to the Temple."

Having by this time reached the more frequented streets, they walked silently and thoughtfully; a feeling of present enjoyment shutting out for a time the sad thoughts that were usually theirs.

Just now the past was forgotten and the future was as a sealed book which they cared not to open. Wrapped in admiration of the Princess, Ben Ammi had no thought but for her happiness; while she instinctively felt the manhood and loyalty of Ben Ammi, and rested content that he was beside her. To them it seemed the sun shone more resplendently than was his custom, and yet with a softly tempered heat. The green foliage in some way was richer in its shades, and more restful to look upon than ever before. The blossoms of the field and garden shone forth in brighter colors and shed their perfume

more deliciously than usual. All nature seemed attempting to harmonize itself with the quiet, inexpressible and all absorbing feeling that was drawing them closer together, comforting them in the sadness of captivity, and weaving in their hearts and minds an indefinite, yet pleasurable anticipation of some future joy, that should more than compensate for the vexations of the present. As they proceeded on their way, all anxiety and turmoil were banished from their thoughts, a peaceful calm dwelt in their hearts, and they passed into the sacred grove in that receptive mood that fitted them to appreciate and absorb all that was spiritual in the Temple worship, of which the entrance to the grove was a constituent though minor part. The arching branches formed canopy of leaves over their heads, which the soft wind gently stirred until the pathway seemed covered with a shadowy carpet of ever changing pattern. Pleasing landscapes met

the eye on either side as they looked out between the sturdy trunks about them, and all conspired to lead them to recognize in these beautiful natural surroundings, the manifestation of the great god's love and care for his people. Emerging from this delightful spot, they came upon the broad stone-paved walk that extended for several hundred feet between two rows of immense marble Sphynxes. which towered above them at regular intervals; and frowned with an awe-inspiring silence upon the passers by. Not a sound but the shuffle of the feet of the worshippers on the hard stone; huge immovable forms fixing their stony gaze incessantly upon them; the straight, white walk glistening in the sun before them; what wonder that Ben Ammi and his companion felt in some degree that a god, in all his power and mightiness, was looking steadily down upon his people and pointing the way in which they should go. This pavement terminated in two great pylons that

flanked the immense arched gateway over which appeared the winged and fan-like emblem of the Sun-god, and beyond this the way led through rows of tall and graceful obelisks that raised their points heavenward like reflected rays of the great orb of day. Interspersed among them were numerous poles running their slender forms equally high as the polished columns about them, while from their tops fluttered bright streamers of various colors. To the two souls whose religious instincts were now keenly alive to such spiritual impressions as might take form from these surroundings, it was not difficult to see symbolized in the shafts and streamers an effort on the part of these worshippers to return to the Sun-god somewhat of the warmth and brightness as well as the beauteous coloring that he so lavishly distributed to the dwellers upon earth. It was not inconsistent with this idea that they should now enter the large open court with its portices on two sides

and its tessellated floor, where in solemn and reverent manner the worshippers deposited their gifts to the god before entering the Temple proper, whose immense walls now rose like some fortress before them. So far all had been in the open air, where the eye might wander to scenes, and the ear be beguiled by sounds that would prevent anything more than a general acknowledgment of the power and magnificence of the deity, even in those grasped most readily the higher significance of the things about them. was nothing in any of this to compel a close or personal application of the religious fact of the omnipotence of God and the dependence of man. The mind was not yet so deprived of the consideration of material things as to force it to an introspective mood, and demand the surrender of the physical self to the control of the spiritual soul. Within the Temple, however, everything tended to the cultivation of the strongest spiritual attributes, and as

they passed into the first hall the bright light of day began to fade and they seemed to have entered a new land. Gigantic columns rose high above them supporting a roof glittering with stars of gold; hieroglyphics in gaudy coloring reflected from every available space: and, as the worshippers passed down the columned aisles, they already began to feel that the earth with all its passing beauty was obscured, and the heavens above had dropped nearer with its starry host. Still moving forward and ascending a short flight of marble steps, they entered a second chamber, the walls of which were more contracted and from which the world was more thoroughly banished. A faint odor of incense filled the air and strains of music from some invisible source fell softly upon the ear. Now and then could be heard from rooms near by, the croaking of the enthroned Frog, or the more startling ery of the sacred Hawk-the voices of the gods themselves, crying to their devoted followers. At

these sounds the worshippers bowed low and solemnly until their foreheads touched the paved floor; and rising again they moved on through the scented atmosphere, their ears drinking in the soft music, the light growing dimmer and the whole religious side of the people becoming more and more dominant. Another hall rose dimly before them. more contracted than the preceding chamber, there came, on entering it, a sense of compression; a feeling of insignificance and helplessness, as though the almighty power of their god was forcing them closer together and himself drawing nearer and nearer, that he might absorb all their small souls into his great being. The odor of the incense grew stronger, the music receded until it seemed but a whisper from the world of spirits, and the cries of the sacred animals were hushed to the ear. Gradually the souls of the worshippers were being driven in on themselves, and a sense of utter dependence was falling

over them. The light grew ghostly in its dimness as they moved on, the ear failed to catch any strain of the music, and the very breathing of the devotees could be heard as they crept silently forward with reverently bowed heads. A few moments of this weirdly solemn procession, and then through the columns in front the light gradually increased. Shadowy forms were seen moving to and fro and growing more distinct as the people advanced. Again the faintest echo of soft music ravished the ear as the chamber of the sanctuary opened before them, with its costly altars and richly dressed throne seats; the priests in their linen robes, bowing and swinging censers of incense, and the High Priests standing by the altars of the gods. Then in low and measured tone from the altar of the god Ra, came the words of the High Priest:

"Hail to thee, Ra, Lord of truth! Whose shrine is hidden, Lord of the gods; Creator 76

sailing in thy boat; at whose command the gods were made; Tum the maker of men; that supporteth their works, that giveth them life, that knoweth how one differeth from another; that listeneth to the poor who is in distress; that art gentle of heart when a man crieth unto thee."

After which the High Priest poured out a libation on the altar while with solemn chant all the priests joined in saying:

"Maker of beings, Creator of existences, Sovereign of life and health and strength, chief of the gods;

We worship thy spirit, which alone hast made us;

We, whom thou hast made, thank thee that thou hast given us birth,

We give praises to thee for thy mercy toward us."

Ben Ammi and his companion raised their eyes and looked up to the sacred place, with all its pomp of purple cloth and glittering

gold, its genuflecting, chanting priests, and its clouds of incense. For a moment the spectacle appealed to them as a whole, and then as its details began to be realized, they started with surprise to see Ne-fert-ari standing by the altar of Ammon Ra. Her proud head thrown well back, her magnificent physique accentuated by her gauze-like robe, her queenly beauty enhanced by the jewels that clapsed her throat, and her left hand touching the gilded cage of the sacred Hawk, she seemed in very fact a deity, the beautiful wife of the god Ammon. In her right hand she held a richly decorated sistrum, ornamented with a carved sacred beetle, and as the last word of the priestly chant was spoken, the metallic ring of the sistrum sounded for a moment and then her voice fell on the hushed worshippers, soft and full, with no discordant note, as she chanted:

"My Lord is my defender; I know his power; he is a strong defender; there is none

mighty beside him; strong is Ammon, and knoweth how to make answer.

"He fulfilleth the desire of all those who pray to him."

And again the priests bowed low and swung their censers, as their voices swelled in unison:

"The gods adore thy majesty;
The spirits thou hast created exalt thee,
Rejoicing before the feet of their begetter,
They cry out welcome to thee,
Father of the father of all gods:
Who raises up the heavens, who fixes the
earth."

The tones of the sistrum again rang out, the fumes of the incense grew more dense and pungent, the music swelled in fuller volume and sweeter cadence, and the priests turned their faces toward the altar of Ammon Ra where Ne-fert-ari still stood as though in rapt contemplation of mysteries invisible to others, while she grew more and more radiantly beautiful. And then in perfect

harmony and with inspired fervor the voices of all the celebrants rose in the words:

"Hail to thee for all these things,
The one alone with many hands;
Lying awake while all men sleep,
To seek the good of thy creatures!
Oh, Ammon, sustainer of all things,
Atium-Horus of the horizon!
Salvation to thee for thy mercy toward us;
Acknowledgment to thee, who hast created
us."

Something like this Ben Ammi and the Hittite maiden had seen before, but never in this magnificence, never with the wife of a Pharaoh among the priests in the service. It seemed like some sensuous dream, which was destined soon to a rude awakening. With their religious feelings so completely stirred as they had been by the passage to this sacred place, they bowed their heads reverently, but looked no more at the face of the beautiful being who stood like some angel of light keep-

ing watch at the entrance gate of the great land of the hereafter.

. . . . . .

The walk back to the palace was one of pleasure, mingled with a faint hope that their lives might yet be brighter. Ben Ammi took this opportunity to inquire concerning the treatment the Princess received at the hands of her mistress, the Queen, and as their conversation ran upon this subject, the maiden said:

"It is indeed a sudden and sorrowful change to me, from authority and freedom among those I loved, to service in the household of an enemy. Yet I would not call the Queen my enemy. She has been kind to me, and only yesterday she spoke graciously to me as we met, making me for the first time forget that I was not among my own. But it may not have been for the best that she did so, for my heart yearned, my brain was in a whirl, and then—"

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The Hittite paused so long that her companion turned to her inquiringly.

"And then?" said he. "May not I know?"

"And then—I hardly dare say it aloud—and then there came a faint hope, oh, so faint, and yet a hope, that something better might soon be mine. My heart fluttered with the struggle between desire and my better judgment. Who but one in like position can know the longing and yet the half fear embodied in that hope, which for an instant lighted my captivity. On the one hand it bade me patiently to wait; but on the other it urged me to ask—oh! I dare not think it again."

The maiden sighed and walked in silence.

Ben Ammi listened for the completion of her sentence in vain, and said:

"To ask—Ah! my beloved, I think my heart shows me what you would ask. Freedom—freedom, that you may return to

Syria and to happiness. A faithful servant may ask of her mistress; how much more should the daughter of a Pharaoh be entitled to receive a favor from a Queen."

She turned a startled look upon him.

"I trust you to be prudent. I cannot ask favors as a Princess; I must beg them as a slave."

The rattle of wheels interrupted as the royal chariot passed, returning to the palace with the stately Priestess-Queen, Ne-fert-ari, whose eyes met theirs but for a moment; yet in that brief glance, the Hittite and the Hebrew saw a look filled with kindness; a look that encouraged again the hope of the maiden.

#### CHAPTER VII.

#### A Plot on Foot.

of Aahmes. He was thirty years old, of graceful manner and comely features, all of which were, in his estimation, valuable assets in his dealings with the fair sex. The easy grace, the charming hauteur, and the attractive face of the Hittite had produced a very marked effect upon him, and he willingly allowed himself to believe that she was the queen of his heart. Beon was in love.

Day after day he strove to find an opportunity to speak to her alone, but failed to such an extent that he did not succeed in winning from her even the slightest recognition. He put himself purposely in such places as her duties would require her to visit, and at such times as he expected she would be present, but with a seeming innocence of his in-

tentions, she succeeded in avoiding him, much to his disappointment and vexation.

In this manner a month had passed, when the time came for which he had waited so long and anxiously, and they stood face to face alone in the servants' hallway. His was the soft and persuasive manner of one who has noted the diplomacy of his superiors and patterned thereby; hers was the proud and haughty spirit that spurned the slave of a race which was, in her sight, inferior to the ancestry from which she was descended. To Beon she was but one of a household in which he held a high position, and there could be no reason why he might not with propriety address her on any subject; therefore he did not hesitate to speak.

"One high in the service of Pharaoh desires to have a few words with the Queen's attendant."

"It is not for me to deny proper speech."

"We might not agree as to what is proper speech, yet I hope to not speak improperly." "Say quickly then."

"What I would say cannot be quickly said. If now I may but begin and finish at some other time, it is well."

"My time belongs to the Queen. I cannot give it you uselessly at the present, nor promise it you for the future."

"Forgive me, fair one, forgive, and hear me. It is not a small thing that I stand near the throne of Pharaoh. He receives his cup at my hands—he speaks soft words to me."

"Pray what is that to me? If this is all you have to say, let'me pass."

"Let me beg that you do not go in such manner. A word spoken to Aahmes by me is of much value, and it is possible I might have opportunity in some future day to speak for you, or for one whom you know."

"There is none for whom I would ask a favor of you."

"The Queen's power with Pharaoh is not greater than mine, and I lay it all at your feet. I am drawn toward the captives whom Aahmes has in the palace; I know how often trouble comes when unexpected; I have seen even the beautiful Ne-fert-ari turn away from those who once were her friends."

"It illy becomes you to place such value upon yourself. I prefer the friendship of the Queen, and cannot accept the offer of a service which doubtless you would ask remuneration for in later days."

"The Hittite does me wrong. Should the Queen be all sufficient for you—is not the Hebrew worthy of a thought? Perhaps to him, who has not yet been assigned by Pharaoh to a permanent place, my influence would be invaluable. Why should he suffer in any manner when my word to Aahmes would place him happily. Let us be friends in this matter."

The head of the Princess was held a little

more proudly, the chest heaved perceptibly under the indignation that swayed her, and her eyes flashed almost wickedly as she replied:

"If the chief butler desires to be of help to the Hebrew, let him go and offer his services direct. As for myself, I am no Egyptian; and I spurn the selfish offer of a slave. Stand aside that I may go my way."

As the Hittite left the astonished butler and hurried to her own quarters, he gazed after her with an ugly light in his eyes. Without the least regard for his office, exhibiting the utmost contempt for him personally, even to calling him a slave, this haughty captive had assumed the role of one born to rule, and beneath his breath he swore revenge.

Immediately a plan suggested itself which, the more he thought about, the more practical and far reaching it seemed, until at last a smile of satisfaction played about his mouth as he resumed his regular duties. During the

day he sought the room of Kames, an officer in the Imperial Escort with whom he had long been friendly, and who had often granted him such favors as lay in his power. Been had not met the officer since the return of the troops from Avaris, and the cordial greetings were followed by an interesting half hour in which Kames related several incidents of the late campaign.

During a pause in the conversation, Beon changed the topic slightly by remarking carelessly:

"We have now in the servants' quarters a young Hebrew captive brought from the north."

"Yes," replied Kames. "I saw him once in the camp, and am now awaiting with interest his disposal."

"There is also a captive maiden attending the Queen."

The officer quickly turned a searching

glance upon the butler, but without noticing it, Beon continued:

"She is fair to look upon. She is not a Hebrew."

"What has an officer of Pharaoh to do with this matter? Has Beon some hidden motive for his remarks?"

"She is not an Egyptian," said the butler, as though there had been no interruption. Whatever might have been the object of Beon in approaching his subject in this manner, he succeeded in provoking Kames to a sharp reply.

"Do not presume upon my friendship to speak in riddles or to ask unseemly questions. My advice is that you consult Hotep before going farther with your investigation in regard to the captive maiden."

"Perhaps an officer of Pharaoh could tell as much as a priest of the Temple," replied Beon, with a leer.

"You are impudent. I have naught to do with her."

"She would be a fit companion for one above my station. Yes, I doubt not she would compare quite favorably with the wives of officers in Pharach's hosts."

Kames looked keenly at the butler, who returned the gaze with a half mocking air, and the officer feeling that there must be some important matter connected with Beon's peculiar conversation, motioned him into a private apartment where they remained for some time in close consultation. When the butler departed, he carried himself with a self-satisfied air, and upon meeting Tai, one of the Queen's attendants, who, like himself, had long been a member of the household, he greeted her with unusual joviality and all the familiarity of an old acquaintance.

"The Queen's satellite has lost none of her brilliancy or beauty."

"Nor has Pharaoh's cup bearer become lean of limb or ill of visage."

"A truce to all compliments and let my lady in waiting tell me somewhat of the new arrival."

"Why does my lord of the pantry hunger after the Hittite? She walks and talks among us as though she were a queen, and yet I can say no harm of her more than that. Before Ne-fert-ari she is prudent of speech, gracious in manner, and of proper behavior; but to us she is cold, and does not make herself one of us."

"I spoke with her to-day and was rebuffed bluntly. She would not in any way respect my office, nor would she find anything in my words but evil. I have a plan to meet her again to-night if you will join me."

"I shall gladly enter into anything that will not bring us into trouble. What have you in mind?"

"Kames would like to make her acquaint-92

ance. He has seen her at a distance; he admires her and would be much elated to speak to her privately. If you can bring her, on some pretext, through the main hall to-night, I think all the rest can be left to me."

"It will be quite late before the Queen allows us to retire."

"So much the better. If you come, be sure to treat the meeting with Kames and myself as a surprise to you, and show yourself willing to stop with us for a time."

"You may expect me; with her if possible—otherwise alone."

That night after the Queen had dismissed them, Tai entered the room of the Hittite and threw herself into a seat.

"How tired I am. I thought the work of the day would never be done. Is the Hittite maiden also fatigued?"

"I feel that I am ready to rest."

"If one could only rest at all times when needing it, how pleasant that would be. But

even now I must go to another part of the palace before I can lie down. Will you also go, that I may have one with whom to walk?"

"How long shall we be gone?"

"But a little while, and I shall be so pleased if you will come with me. We see but little outside the Queen's apartments, and this will do us both good, tired though we are."

They left the room together and walked leisurely along, occasionally exchanging a few words on the trifling events of the day. The Hittite enjoyed the change as she unsuspectingly traversed the hallway, and Tai was burning with excitement at the thought of what might happen in the next few seconds. Turning an angle where the shadows fell, making objects less distinct, they encountered Beon and Kames talking with such earnestness that they did not observe the approach of the maids. Standing so as to obstruct the passage, they did not move and the butler spoke gaily.

- "The ladies are walking late to-night."
- "Only an errand, Beon."
- "A lucky errand for us, as it gives us sight of your beauty."
- "Save your pretty speeches. See how others hold their tongues."

As Tai whisperingly said these last words, she tossed her head toward the officer, who was standing with his face turned partly away from them, watching the Hittite with intense interest. The face of the captive indicated the utmost unconcern at first, but as her companion showed no inclination to move on, she addressed her:

- "It is quite late; let us proceed."
- "A minute more," said Tai.
- "Why so short a time," returned Beon with a smile.
- "It would please me to be presented to the stranger," added Kames.

Without the least recognition of the re-

marks of the butler and his friend, the Hittite again spoke.

"Why do we not perform the errand and return?"

"Have patience, pray. The day's work is done and we should taste of pleasure when we can."

The Princess turned away with the intention of retracing her steps to the Queen's apartments, when she was intercepted by Kames. With the temerity of one who feels confident of success, he addressed her entreatingly:

"Fair maiden, why this haste? I pray you, hear me. I saw you, like an angel, in the camp at Avaris; even as you stood beside the Hebrew, I envied him the place, for my heart was smitten. Turn not away from me now."

Kames had not met among the maidens of his acquaintance, one like this. The languair, the soft love-lit eye, that answered w



"The Exyptian before me, I hate!"

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he spoke winsomely to others, were not seen in the stranger before him. He was suddenly confronted by an erect, quivering figure, with head haughtily elevated and eyes that glittered with a sense of insult. An expression of disdain colored the words which, in subdued tones that but added an indignant emphasis, she now spoke:

"Why should I pause to hear an officer of Aahmes? Avaris I knew and loved; the Hebrew is brave and I trust him; the Egyptian before me, I hate!"

Then waving him aside, she passed on majestically, while Tai, startled at the turn of affairs, followed hurriedly after.

Been and the officer stood alone, and for a few moments neither spoke.

- "She is unapproachable," remarked
  - "I said as much to you to-day."
  - "I hardly believed, however, that with
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others present, she would so abruptly refuse to talk for a short time."

"Now that you are satisfied on one point, let us consider the next. We can neither of us win her-shall the Hebrew be allowed to have her? Are we to be ignored,—yes, insulted by this Hyksos captive, that she may bestow her charms upon one whom we despise? Hotep will, no doubt, have the Hebrew under his care and we can make no successful effort to reach him; but in the palace are many ways by which a maiden may be brought low. Ashmes, even, may be made to serve us. You have heard my plan as given you to-day; you have seen that we can hope for no recognition from the Hittite; let us unite in working up to the extreme act, which my scheme contemplates."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

#### Three Pictures in the Palace.

Aahmes in the palace, and after a brief conversation, Ben Ammi was summoned to join them. Pharaoh gave him but slight recognition, while the High Priest addressed him with all the formality of a court conference, and with no outward appearance of the friendship he had expressed at Avaris when they first met.

"The time has come when the Hebrew must leave the palace because Pharaoh has no place there for him. I have asked that you may come to me in the Temple."

"That which pleases Pharaoh and the High Priest in this matter, will be accepted by me gladly, as being for the best interests of the King."

"In this you are wise. There is much

spoken against you in the palace, and Pharaoh would quiet the murmurings by removing the cause. I have suggested that a life for you in the Temple service would be an easy and permanent ending of the difficulty."

Here Hotep paused and looked keenly at Ben Ammi, who saw, behind all the dignity that hid it from Pharaoh, an expression of unselfish interest in his personal welfare. Evenly and calmly the High Priest continued:

"If there comes before you the remembrance of an altar in a far off land, pause and give it due consideration. If, to your ears come again the words of prophecy heard at that altar, do not turn away from them hurriedly. The step which you are now asked to take can never be retraced."

"Ben Ammi fears not, nor does he falter. I am pleased with the frankness of the High Priest, I bow in deference to the judgment of Pharaoh and am ready at once to take my place in the Temple of Ammon Ra."

Ashmes had not understood correctly the import of the words of Hotep, but putting his own construction upon them, he addressed Ben Ammi briefly:

"The altar of the God of the Hebrews is indeed far away from this place, and the prophecies of his patriarchs are not known among this people. It is well that Hotep allows Ammon Ra to claim you, and I now surrender you to the High Priest."

Ashmes then retired and Hotep, speaking with more familiarity and yet with great seriousness, resumed:

"If the Temple service does not please you, my influence could secure a place for you above mere menial servitude, but the present course is, in my judgment, the best. I must, however, warn you again that this step once taken, can never be recalled. Listen well. The Hittite is in the palace and the heart of Ne-fert-ari has been made glad. The Hebrew is about to be received into the Temple as an

offering by Aahmes to Ammon Ra. Two parts of the vision vouchsafed me at the altar in the camp will have been fulfilled on the day you enter the service with me. Do you still consent?"

"In all this I recognize the hand of God, but I believe not in fate. If the palace be the home of the Hittite, it is better for her than to serve elsewhere; and if the High Priest looks with favor upon me, I would be ungrateful not to appreciate it. All this is not transpiring because of the prophecy; it is but the hand of God."

"The Hebrew may have his own views; the facts are as I said they would be. Remain here until I visit another part of the palace, and then we will depart together."

A few minutes later, Hotep was seated in a chamber of the Queen's apartments, and with him was the Hittite maiden. She felt herself drawn toward this man whose official dignity did not entirely hide a heart that was touched

by her lonely position; and as she now sat in his presence, she yearned to lay before him the troubles and anxieties that had within the past few hours so overpowered her.

The High Priest looked sympathizingly upon her as she waited, with downcast eyes and seriously thoughtful expression, for him to speak.

"The daughter of Apepi is sad," said he.

"Trouble has overtaken me; unhappiness has enveloped me."

"Hotep would gladly listen to your trouble and stand between you and any danger that may threaten."

"The arm of the Hebrew is strong, his heart is brave, and he has promised to protect."

She looked straight into the eyes of Hotep with a clear and trustful expression that told him how strong her confidence was in Ben Ammi, and then continued:

"Within the palace walls are those whom I

must look upon as enemies. They pass through the hallways at night, and do not hesitate to insult me both in speech and in act. I cannot bring myself to place the matter before the Queen, nor dare I venture to give knowledge of it to the Hebrew."

Hotep did not betray the surprise he felt at this last speech of the Hittite, but thought quickly before making reply. Putting aside for the moment, his desire to know more of this unexpected condition so briefly stated by the Princess, he proceeded to the object he had in view—namely, to inform her of the Hebrew's removal from the palace.

"Your surroundings in this place will no doubt often bring sadness to you. These people are not your people, nor are they of your former rank, and it is easy for you not to understand them. There will come days, however, when pleasure will abound instead of sorrow, and days also when Hotep must take

the place of the Hebrew as your friend in the palace."

"Has aught happened to the Hebrew?" queried the Hittite in startled tones.

"Pharaoh has given him over to me; he will leave the palace to-day."

An expression of pain was on her face as she looked into the eyes of the High Priest, and spoke with forced calmness.

"The palace is the home of the Hittite and the Hebrew enters the Temple. I heard it said beside the altar far away that these things should be; and the words are now being fulfilled as part of my life. Already I feel that a shadow walks beside me; already there appears the trouble which the vision of Hotep foreshadowed."

"That which Ammon Ra has clearly spoken, must come to pass. That which the great God leaves in doubt we should not try to discover. If, now, the vision is in part fulfilled, remember the other parts were less dis-

tinct and it may please Ammon Ra that they be not accomplished. Let us speak of the things that now annoy you, for I am desirous of knowing who makes the daughter of Apepi afraid?"

Instantly her whole expression changed, as something of her usual intrepidity manifested itself.

"Fear enters not into my heart. They who lie in wait and force themselves upon me, are not such as could make me afraid. One is a captain in the escort of Aahmes but not a warrior, for were he such he could not stoop to trample upon a helpless woman. I heard my father tell of one who alone, struck down three of Nebka's soldiers, as they sought to kill Pharaoh; and in the face of the enemy's darts, held at bay five Egyptians who essayed to climb the outer wall of Avaris. Yet I saw him afterward, of gentle manner and unselfish kindness, with no thought but to serve a cap-

tive maiden. The Hebrew is a warrior; Kames is a slave!"

"I am sorry, indeed, that you should be subjected to an indignity, but you must expect some rude acts from those who deem it a weakness to respect the feelings of a captive. Remember that with the Queen is personal safety, and that I am sent by Ammon Ra to dispense comfort to the sorrowful. Should the time come when the darkness gathers so thickly about the Princess of the Hittites that no ray of hope can penetrate it, Hotep will draw near, the Hebrew will put forth his strength and Ne-fert-ari, the Queen, will not turn away her face. Farewell."

When the Hittite was left alone in the room, the realization of her helpless position, the acts of the butler and his friend, and the words of Hotep all combined to fill her with a flood of thoughts and conjectures that were far from pleasant or encouraging. She stood with her back to the door, looking through the

open window and yet not seeing—so deeply absorbed that the entrance of the Queen did not arouse her. For a few moments a picture was presented that was intensely attractive and interesting. The stately Ne-fert-ari, with all the voluptuous development and sensuous expression that belonged to the Ethiopian of the Southland, paused upon entering, with her head slightly bowed, her lips parted as by a breath and her eyes full of the fervor born of warm blood and deep religious feeling. The graceful and well knit figure of the Hittite, with her firm mouth, erect bearing and penetrating eyes that testified to the strength of character behind them, formed a pleasing contrast. Both were striking types of the races from which they sprang, and although long ages had brought a certain civilization that their ancestors did not possess, yet the languid air and emotional characteristics of the southern tribes, and the hardy, fearless traits of the northern barbarian were still to

be read in these majestic representatives, who now, each unconscious of the presence of the other, made an inspiring and unique tableau in the room of the Egyptian Queen.

Suddenly, feeling that she was not alone, the Hittite turned, saluted confusedly, and was about to retire from the Queen's presence when Ne-fert-ari seated herself and motioned the Hittite to draw near.

"I have heard through Hotep that you are the daughter of Apepi," said the Queen softly.

"Hotep has spoken truthfully."

"The High Priest is good and upholds that which is right. He has great regard for the daughter of Apepi."

The Hittite bowed low as she replied:

"The High Priest is indeed good, and it is my desire to please him."

"It is a gratification to me that you should say this. When Aahmes brought me down from Ethiopia and raised me to a high posi-

tion here, I was treated as a stranger by all save Hotep. Like as his heart turned to the Ethiopian Princess then, so it now turns to the Princess of the Hittites. When Aahmes was made Pharaoh and I also was raised higher, the High Priest had purified my heart; I had stood before the altar with the priests in the Temple. When the Hittite shall fall down before Ammon Ra, and shall hearken unto the teachings of Hotep, then will she have peace."

The reply of the Princess was modestly yet firmly spoken:

"Over my father's house the god Sutech spread out his hands, while Apepi and all his people fell down and worshipped before him. Does the Queen command that I shall turn away from my father's god, because I am in a land where Sutech has no temple? Hotep is good indeed, and faithfully stands before his god; but so is the Hebrew good, who does not worship Ammon Ra nor bow himself to Sutech."

"The Queen would not command in this case, but offers her advice to one who stands well in her sight. Yet hearken, daughter of Apepi! Ashmes rules. And this day Kames of the Imperial Escort came to him and said: 'The captive maiden walks alone in the servant's hall late at night. When she is asked why she walks there she refuses to tell and turns away haughtily. In the camp and on the march the Hebrew cared for the maiden, and she turned her eyes favorably upon him. Is not the Hebrew in the palace? Pharaoh is wise and can now see why she walks.' Ashmes listened in astonishment—he removed the Hebrew from the palace—he gave him to be with the High Priest in the Temple. Might it not be that the Hebrew bows to Ammon Ra ?"

"May the Queen forgive, for I spoke hastily when I placed the name of Ben Ammi over against that of Hotep. Nor would I have the Queen feel that I could do aught that she

would not approve. Kames speaks not the truth as to my walking late and alone, for only once did I visit the servant's hall late at night, with one of the Queen's attendants and with no thought of evil. Enemies lie in wait to bring me low in the sight of the Queen by saying that which is false unto Pharaoh. O. Queen! Let me speak from my heart! It has been revealed to me that trouble should come upon me in the palace, and already its dark shadow falls across my path. The days are drawing near when the shadow will enwrap me-when the trouble that walks beside me will swallow me up. But in that day I shall hold high my head—in that day the Queen will not be ashamed of me."

"Let not the Hittite feel too keenly the situation now forced upon her. Hotep is your friend. Ne-fert ari is not your enemy."

#### CHAPTER IX.

#### Selecting the Sacrifice.

T was some months after the return of Aahmes from Avaris, that he and Hotep sat one day in the council chamber discussing an important question which now occupied the attention of court circles. The Nile was slowly and silently creeping up its banks premonishing the annual rise. this time until the river should reach its highest point, spreading out to fructify the land, the advancing stages would be watched with the keenest interest, and thoughts naturally reverted to the annual sacrifice to propitiate the waters and secure the utmost blessings of the overflow. Then, to some of the nobles, came the idea of making the festival of the sacrifice a festival of commemoration as well. Egypt was again united under a native ruler, and the future seemed to hold for her a higher

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civilization and greater magnificence than had marked the glorious days before the reign of the Shepherd Kings. In prophetic vision many saw the unfolding of art and science, so long trammeled under foreign dynasties: saw the new architectural embellishments that should spring up as the development of peaceful reigns, and the state prowess that should result from bold and successful military campaigns. Already the dawn of the brilliant dynasties soon to follow, was seen upon the horizon by the best and noblest of the inhabitants of the land. All this feeling underlaid the thought of making the festival of the sacrifice an occasion for ceremonies of a character commensurate with the importance of the late events, and the high hopes of the future. kingly pageant of boats from Thebes to On; a gorgeous procession up the river from the Delta to the same point; and there the magnificent celebration of the solemn sacrifice, that

should mark an epoch in the history of the nation.

These were the larger thoughts that emanated from priest, soldier and courtier alike. But smaller thoughts, from smaller men, were being utilized for the purpose of deciding upon one who should be the central figure of this great festival, as she would stand for a moment before the people crowned with flowers and adorned with jewels, that she might sink beneath the turbid waters as the Bride of the Nile. Jealousy, hatred and revenge entered into the consideration of this question, for from Kames and Beon came the first suggestion that a captive taken at Avaris should be offered up. It was plausible; there were some things to even commend it. The scheme would be in harmony with the offering of captives to Ammon Ra by assigning them to service in the Temple. So the suggestion took root and grew in favor with all; but no one suspected that the real end, sought to be

reached by these two members of the palace household, was the sacrifice of the Hittite maiden, the daughter of Apepi. Quietly they worked in this direction, poisoning the minds of those about them, and allowing the poison to spread insidiously, until charges were made against the fair captive, and innuendoes scattered about that could only be traced to that hateful, indefinite authorship—"they say." These were the conditions that existed on the day that Pharaoh and Hotep sat in the council room of the palace. The brow of Aahmes was clouded and the face of Hotep was sad. had been conversing for some time of the proposed festival, going over much of the detail, until now the question as to obtaining a sacrifice was before them.

"Hotep has heard the suggestion as to the festival connected with the sacrifice to the Nile. He has listened to the speech of wise men, and has learned of the ambitions of my people. They are all matters on which there

is little difference of opinion and are, therefore, easy of disposal. But is it a small thing to select the person who shall act as the Bride? Does Hotep join with others of the court in wishing the Hittite maiden to go down beneath the waters of the Nile? Pharaoh is perplexed and seeks knowledge from the High Priest."

"I have heard,—I have listened, as my lord the King has stated. To me, it is not a small thing that the daughter of Apepi is named as the sacrifice, for Hotep does not want it to be so. The King will hearken unto his servant Hotep when he says, that so long as the people do not believe the things spoken against the Hittite, the King need not be perplexed. Until Ne-fert-ari stands aloof from the daughter of Apepi, the King cannot well be against her."

"The people do believe, at least in part, and the Hittite has estranged herself from the Queen's attendants. In a little while Ne-fert-

ari must put her aside. The course of wisdom will demand it."

"Has the King any knowledge of the things spoken against the Hittite, whether they be the truth, or whether the tongues that tell them are dipped in lies? The daughter of Apepi is true. The Hittite does not lie."

"As Hotep says, so Pharaoh thinks. But a commotion is raised; a sacrifice must be had. How can Pharaoh turn against his court without danger? Even this day Kames brings word to me of new clamors for her sacrifice. He reports that the household, the escort, the nobles and many on the street are saying, 'Why should the Hyksos Princess hold up her head? Is the King smitten with a captive?' And Beon has reported that Tai, who also serves before the Queen, turns away from the Hittite. When the Queen asks, 'Why turnest thou?' she shrugs her shoulders and replies, 'It is not for me to say aught against the Hittite, but I have heard strange tales. Even

Hotep is not proof against her wiles.' The Queen cannot listen to aught against Hotep; neither can she speak for the Hittite in such a matter."

"It is worse than I have thought. Well may the King turn to this side or that for excuse to save the captive. No way presents itself to me now unless—" Here the High Priest paused.

"Let Hotep speak on. Pharaoh would hear all that can be said."

"Unless the King is willing to assert his power and proclaim some other for the sacrifice."

"I indeed have power, but the nation has only now come together. In vain all the plans for a great festival, if at the start Pharaoh and his court are separated. The palace is far removed from the northern part of the Kingdom, and Pharaoh is a stranger at the mouth of the Nile. Nebka is strong; Butan is his friend. At Memphis and at On they are

high in esteem and their arms were strong in the battle. Would it be a hard thing to divide Egypt, if peradventure I should separate myself from my own?"

"Far be it from me, O King, to intimate such a course, but I beg my Lord the King to give me time. A week, perhaps, may bring forth something more. However, if the King has decided, I bow to his will."

"Pharaoh will wait. The interview is concluded."

Hotep retired from the chamber and Aahmes sat in deep thought. Suddenly rousing himself, he looked about to see if he were alone, and said:

"The High Priest can find no reasonable excuse. All my positions are well taken and he cannot overthrow them. In the sight of Hotep and all who make inquiry of me, I stand as one forced by circumstances, to name the Hittite as the sacrifice. They will never know that her charms drew me toward her

only that I should be fearlessly repulsed. Proffered riches had no attraction; the offer of place made no impression upon her; but with proud and haughty air she turned away saying, 'The Queen is kind unto me—Hotep is good to the captive, Aahmes is my enemy even as he was the enemy of my father, Apepi.' And now, she goes to be the sacrifice, and Hotep can find no excuse to save her.''

#### CHAPTER X.

#### The Hittite at Bay.

N leaving Pharaoh, Hotep went directly to the room of the Queen, where a brief conference was held; after which he left the palace, going at once to the Temple. Ben Ammi was busy preparing for the service soon to begin, for every day both in the morning and in the afternoon, the Temple was thronged with worshippers. The High Priest took the Hebrew aside into one of the smaller rooms of the priests, and addressed him with much feeling:

"It is now several weeks since you were assigned to serve in the Temple of Ammon Ra, and during that time the great god has purified your heart; he has enlightened your mind. In that time, the Hittite has turned the light of her eye upon you and made you glad. But Ammon Ra has not turned aside from his pur-

poses; he has brought to pass the things that he willed; he moves on to perform that which is yet to come. All the love that the Hittite maiden bears you, cannot in the least move him. All the hope that beats high in your breast, cannot alter his plans. Yet there is much for which you should be thankful, and I am pleased that you have so bravely met the trials that have beset you."

"The High Priest speaks truly when he says that I have had joy in the love of the Princess, and I should be ungrateful did not my heart give thanks for the blessings that are mine. The past has brought its trouble for me,—the future is not bright; yet I shall not anticipate any evil that may be in store for me."

"Such is the wise course, and I pray that you may be strong to bear that which must come upon you. You have heard of the things that have happened at the palace; how great troubles have cast their shadow about the path of her whom you love, while here you have

felt the throbbing pain, as sorrow silently laid its hand upon your soul. Through these you have read that which is written of the future."

"I see, most gracious Hotep, those things coming to pass which were spoken by you in the camp; but I am not willing to accept the fulfillment of a part of your vision as an assurance that those other things, which were seen but indistinctly, must necessarily follow. Hotep is good and wise—the Princess is brave—I still may hope."

"I am glad to see on your part a disposition to hope for the best, as the Queen and the Princess are coming this day to the Temple, that we may speak together upon this subject which is of so much importance to all. Nefert-ari is kind to the Hittite, and has never forsaken her; but the Princess is proud, and fearless as to what the future may hold in store for her. Let us not place too much hope

on reaching a satisfactory conclusion to-day. The time for worship is now at hand."

The statement made by the High Priest as to the meeting to be held after the service, disturbed the mind of Ben Ammi for a time, but as he prepared the incense, lighted the censers and placed the leopard skin over the shoulders of Hotep, his own affairs were lost to sight in his admiration of the High Priest. peaceful calm had settled over his face. All that was pure and holy in his character shone forth in that spiritualized countenance, while a look of love, almost supernatural, beamed softly from his dark eyes, as clothed with the dignity of his high office, he bowed himself before the throne of his god, a reverent worshipper. Looking up from the throng of those about her, the Hittite Princess stood entranced by his humility, fervent devotion and adoration, and felt something akin to love for this man, who had impressed her as had no other Egyptian.

The last libation was still trickling from the altar of Ammon Ra, the perfume of incense hung about the throne seats, and the strains of music had hardly died away, when in the priest's room, Hotep, the Queen and the two captives were assembled. The High Priest, at whose request the others were present, first addressed the Hittite.

"The daughter of Apepi has been brought here, that we may speak of the things concerning her life. You have already had some unpleasant experiences, and have felt the sting of lying tongues; yet more than you have dared even to think, has been said of you both in and out of the palace. I prophesied once with the words which Ammon Ra put into my mouth and that prophecy is in part fulfilled. Even now sorrow walks with the Hittite in the palace, and trouble is written upon the countenance of the Hebrew as he serves in the temple. Shall the vision granted me go on to complete fulfillment? The Nile is gathering

up his waters preparatory to pouring out his blessing upon the land, and a Bride is sought for the sacred river."

Hotep paused and looked toward the Queen who at once said:

"My heart is sad for the daughter of Apepi. More than I have told you before, is mine to know; and I have not hearkened when others spoke evil concerning you. Aahmes rules, and he it is who passes judgment. When I fell upon my knees and humbled myself before him for your sake, he wept; and looking sadly down upon me, he said, 'Fain would I grant that which you ask, but my people must be heard—I must do that which is pleasing to them.' Then he showed me how that the land must be pacified, and not distracted; how, for the good of the nation, he should hearken unto the desires of his nobles rather than oppose them, in a matter of such interest to them."

In subdued tones the Hittite spoke:

"If the words of the High Priest and of the Queen, bring any message to me, it is one of sadness,—for it means that a sacrifice is to be selected, and that the advisors of Pharaoh have suggested the Hittite captive. The Queen has graciously interceded for me, but without success, and Hotep asks, 'Shall the vision go on to complete fulfillment?' What shall I say? If it be the will of the gods that these things happen, the daughter of Apepi cannot prevent it.''

Ben Ammi hastily replied:

"It may not be that the gods have decreed that these things shall surely come to pass; and to depart from Egypt might turn aside the danger, which now threatens the maiden. Once before when we thought to do such a thing, the High Priest stood in the way and turned us back; now, if we should make the effort, Hotep would stretch out his arm to help, and the Queen would not oppose."

With a look which testified plainly that the 128

words of Ben Ammi were appreciated as coming from the heart, she answered with decision:

"The Hebrew in the kindness of his heart does not see as I do. If I should flee it would be evidence of some guilt, or of cowardice. Neither of these belongs to me, and I shall not attempt to escape. Ben Ammi is true and brave and would despise a faint heart. The Queen is pure and good and would not rejoice in any deceit. Hotep has always been my friend, and will still advise me, but not to flee. If I am to be the sacrifice,—if to me it is alloted to wed the Nile,—then there shall be a Bride worthy in every way, to partake of all the sacredness ascribed to the river."

The strong words of the Hittite Princess stirred the souls of her listeners and for a moment commanded silence. Then the Queen arose to depart, and spoke gently to her:

"Let it be as the daughter of Apepi has
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said. You are already suggested as the sacrifice and cannot be hidden away; for, until the time comes for the offering, a watch will be about your footsteps and none will dare attempt your release. Ashmes rules."

Ben Ammi and the maiden returned to the palace by the same way over which they had passed, with joy in their hearts, but a few short months ago. Now there was no ray of light to pierce the darkness of the future; and as they parted at the palace gate both had united in submitting to that which seemed inevitable, though still clinging to a vague hope that the High Priest might yet find some way of relief.

Within her room the Hittite sat in silence, but her thoughts ran rapidly.

"Aahmes indeed rules, but who are his advisors in this case? Even those who have laid in wait for my footsteps to put indignity upon me. Beon is not worthy to stand before me, and yet he dared to desire me; Kames

fawned upon me like a hypocrite in the hope that he might possess me. As these are, so is Aahmes. His heart went not out to me, but his passion ruled him and when I, whom he thought to make his prey, pointed my finger in scorn at him, he turned against me and was ready to listen to the tongues of slander. Nefert-ari is kind to me, but Aahmes rules—I go to be the Bride."

Hotep sat for a few minutes after the departure of the others, going over in his mind all that had been said, and considering the situation carefully. As he thought, he spoke half audibly:

"Aahmes is correct, when he says that he dare not shield the Hittite under such circumstances as have arisen. The daughter of Apepi speaks with all the earnestness of her fearless soul, when she says she will not flee; and the Queen has well said that now the Hittite has been named for the sacrifice, she will be watched too closely to permit her being

hidden. I shall see Pharaoh, and tell him I can offer no reason by which he can successfully oppose those who desire that the captive Princess shall be offered as the sacrifice. And yet—''

Hotep stopped suddenly, and something akin to a frown passed over his face, as he seemed lost to all about him in the deep reverie that took possession of him.

#### CHAPTER XI.

#### An Exceptional Interview.

ROM that day, as the Queen had said it should be, a watch was placed upon the captive, and she, knowing that there was no possible chance of escape, contemplated her coming death with the unconcern of a stoic. Her proud spirit was in no wise broken, and she seemed more beautiful than before as she daily cultivated the spirit and action befitting the ideal she had embraced of a perfect Bride, whose marriage ceremony would be the ceremony of a sacrificial offering to the gods.

The Queen was compelled, from public policy, to remove her from the close intimacy of an attendant, but, that no outward manifestation of degradation might be seen by the slaves and repeated to the populace, Ne-fertari kept her in one of the rooms allotted to the

Queen's retinue, and allowed her to assist in minor duties. There were times too, when the Queen sent for her under pretense of some special duty to be performed, and for a brief period would attempt to cheer her half-way prisoner's life. For all this the Hittite maiden was very thankful, and each time, on retiring to her own room, she repeated her resolve to show her gratitude for such kindness by conduct, both as a captive and as the sacrifice, that should not in any way make the Queen regret the confidence placed in her.

Hotep, having advised Aahmes according to the King's wishes, was still in the good graces of both Pharaoh and the Queen; and had access freely to the palace, and permission to see the Hittite alone as he might desire. This last privilege, the High Priest had not availed himself of until now, which was about a month after the captive had been removed from her position as attendant on the Queen. The object of his visit was solely to satisfy himself

as to how she was bearing up under her new conditions; but, if his object had been to enthuse her for the part she had to play in the tragedy so soon to be enacted, he could not have succeeded better. As he entered her room, she was seated on a stool, looking out of the window which presented a limited view of the waters of the Nile above the city. Already the river was reddening under the increased volume which was beginning to bring from the southern hills, the loose soil that would, with the richer deposit, be spread over the valley below. She arose immediately and followed her respectful salutation to the High Priest, with expressions of pleasure at his coming. As she again seated herself at his request, he drew a chair near her and said pleasantly:

"The daughter of Apepi is looking well, and I am very glad to have it so."

"My place now demands little work of me,

my food is plentiful and my sleep is sound. All things conspire to keep me in health."

"I have often inquired how the Hittite Princess fared, and the answers have been quite satisfactory to me, but I desired to see for myself."

"I thank you for such kind attention. Perhaps the High Priest felt that something preyed upon my mind. I still turn my heart to the god Sutech. I am calm and fear not."

"The daughter of Apepi is brave. I admire your constancy, and have respect for your honorable actions. But as I looked into the future and saw the great strain coming upon your courage, I could not remain away."

"May I speak from my heart? Shall I show unto Hotep the thoughts of my brain? Even as you came in, my eyes were upon the river. It is narrow—it is hemmed in. Far to the north, where I have always dwelt, it is not so. As it sweeps by the embankments at Memphis, it spreads far out over the valley.

Farther on it separates into many parts and these reach down to Xois and far over to Avaris. It spreads its waters, it deposits its rich earth, and the great northland is blessed. Look ye! As over there it flows between high banks, it hurries on to enrich, not this land, but the land below."

She paused, and turning her eyes from the window, she looked at Hotep for a moment and resumed:

"Not here have I loved the Nile. Not here does it widen to embrace its worshippers, nor reach out its arms to bless. Far away where it shimmered in a thousand canals, have I seen it,—a very god distributing bounteous gifts, and receiving in return the offering of a grateful people. I have looked out on the turbid waters; I have seen the Bride in her robes of royalty, and I have felt sometimes that it was an honor to wed the sacred river. The time has come when I go to be the Bride. Down from the narrow, confined stream, to

the broad and life-giving waters, shall pass the sacrifice. Then I shall be in the land where I love the water, the plain, the moun-The river will sing its wild lullaby. The fields will await its touch to burst into blossom and be glad. From the mountain tops the sun will reflect his glory, and a gorgeous mantle will enwrap the landscape in the evening when I shall be wed. There I shall stand-'' and as she spoke, she rose with such a royal bearing that involuntarily Hotep also stood. "There I shall stand with chains upon my ankles as emblems of my captivity, but with peace in my heart, and with courage unabated. The lotus blossom will cling lovingly about my neck, and fall with airy grace adown my side. A wreath of the sweetest roses will adorn my head; and upon my arms. bracelets of precious stones will vie in brilliancy with the rays of the Sun-god of the heavens.

"No Princess in all that throng will stand

more proudly than the daughter of Apepi, as with fearless eye she looks down into the darkling waters. And when the priests have taken me up and laid me in the bosom of the Nile, I shall indeed be as a bride going to her husband. Fair of cheek, bright of eye, proud of mein, the Hittite will pass away forever."

As she ceased speaking, Hotep stood motionless and silent. Never had he seen more perfect abandon to an object; never more royal pose. A rich glow of enthusiasm mantled her cheeks; an intelligence that was almost prophetic flashed from her eyes; and as she stood with lips firmly set, and her whole frame quivering with the emotion that possessed her, he gazed upon her with admiration. A reverence for this exceptional Princess of a despised dynasty seized upon him; her words entranced him; her beauty dazzled him.

The Hittite broke the silence.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Pardon me if I have spoken long."

<sup>&</sup>quot;It was a pleasure to hear the brave words

you have just uttered. There is no need for me to speak, for the Hittite has taught the High Priest."

As Hotep strode toward the Temple, his thoughts kept pace with his hastening step. Before him stood continually the figure of the Hittite, as she appeared when she drew her word picture of the sacrifice. Every glance of the eye, every shading color of expression, every graceful gesture that marked her words, seemed to be indelibly stamped upon his mind.

"Wonderful," he mused. "What Ne-fertari is to the Temple service, the Hittite will be to the festival at On. Never in my time has such a Bride appeared, yet my heart rebels against her being offered as the sacrifice. If Aahmes had but hearkened to me before the people clamored, then had it been different. To the day when I shall be carried to my tomb, I shall not forget her face as she

stood before me this day. Out from every dark moment of my life, I shall see the brilliant, penetrating sparkle of her eye as it shone into my soul. Mingled with every invocation to Ammon Ra I shall hear that sweet, yet fearless voice, giving testimony to the pure and gracious spirit within her. Would that the great god might enlighten the mind of his servant Hotep with power to save the daughter of Apepi."

Passing into the Temple he approached Ben Ammi and requested him to spend a short time with him at his villa. But a little distance away, walled in from vulgar gaze, the grounds of the High Priest lay like an Eden. All that sparkling fountains, rare plants, glassy lakes, beautiful flowers, circling walks, and other works of art and gifts of nature could furnish to beautify the place, were there. Back from the entrance stood his house, where, between the times of his daily ablutions and incense burning, he might retire

from the life of spiritualities and assume such worldliness as was necessary to the management of his estates, the enjoyment of his family and the modest entertainment of his friends. Thither he and Ben Ammi went, as they had often done before, and entered the private room where none might interrupt.

"I have just returned," said he, "from a visit to the Hittite maiden. No Princess in Egypt is her superior. Her soul rises above her unpleasant surroundings,—her words burn with zeal."

"Then she looks upon her sacrifice to the Nile as certain, and entertains no hope of escape."

"Not only does she accept the certainty of being offered as the Bride, but she looks forward to the coming of that day with fervent enthusiasm, and embraces her fate with an ecstatic pleasure."

"I see that I have hoped against hope, and

I now submit to my lot with whatever fortitude I can command."

"You are wise in doing so. There are other things about which I would speak, and which I trust you will remember to faithfully perform. Whatever may happen, under any circumstances, do not forget to be discreet; and should I not be in my place at any time, make no inquiry as to the cause. I shall not burden you with a secret that might cause you to speak that which is untrue, or on the other hand, betray me innocently. Ashmes will not ask of you concerning me, nor will the Queen seek knowledge of me from you. If others inquire as to where the High Priest may be found, say to them, 'I know not where he is.' And now I would be alone. I shall not appear at the Temple to-day and Semnut will be in full charge."

Ben Ammi left the villa of Hotep with a sad heart, although in outward appearance he showed nothing of the anxiety and sorrow

that prayed upon him; and as he prepared for the service, he tried to forget the coming festival which was now the great topic of conversation and for which extensive preparations, on the part of soldiery, priests and royal retinues, were rapidly progressing.

#### CHAPTER XII.

#### From Thebes to On.

The day dawned auspiciouly on which the fleet of Aahmes was to start from Thebes. In accordance with the plans agreed upon, messengers had been sent down the valley, announcing the intention of leaving the capital at a certain date, and inviting the various cities along the river to join the pageant with some representation. From places which were situated away from the Nile banks, large numbers on foot and in chariots were expected to swell the throng that should witness the imposing ceremonies at On. The whole land was stirred, and everything pointed to a magnificent display.

At Thebes, in the early morn, was heard the blast of trumpets and the beating of drums, preliminary to embarking. No pains had been spared in preparing the boats for this (10)

occasion, and from the royal barge down to the small skiff of the artificer, the decorations of flowers and streamers were rich and varied enough to satisfy the most fastidious taste. As the pageant moved out of Thebes on the red bosom of the now swollen river, the nobles took their places in the van and floated gaily away, immediately followed by a part of the royal escort, with the pennants of Aahmes and the army standards. Then came Pharaoh's boats bearing the royal family and a limited retinue, lounging beneath the many colored awnings that were stretched above the decks: while from the strings of harps, strains of soft, voluptuous music floated out on the clear air. The vessels of the priests followed in gala dress, with golden images of the gods at stem and stern, and the voices of the occupants rising in grandeur as they chanted their hymn to the Nile. After these were the remainder of the royal escort; and then the various friendly groups, or individual craft,

that closed the line, which, amid the cheering of the gathered populace along the shore, sailed majestically away.

On the boat of the High Priest was the daughter of Apepi. That morning she had been given over to Hotep to prepare for the occasion, and as all detail had been previously attended to, it required but little time for her to be properly arrayed. As the fleet passed the multitudes gathered upon the banks, the Hittite stood at the bow of the boat beside the god of the Nile. Upon her head a chaplet of roses shone brilliantly in the sun. About her neck, and hanging down in front on either side, were heavy strands of lotus bloom. Costly bracelets adorned her finely moulded arms and encircled her shapely ankles. Her dress was of the finest linen, which draped rather than hid the form, and as she stood in self-confident pose, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks glowing and an ethereal beauty resting upon her, the people expressed such hearty

approval and delight as obtained for them a gracious recognition in the waving of her royal hand. With the Hittite and Hotep were two or three of his faithful slaves taken from his villa; while Ben Ammi had his place among the other priests, and seemed to bear up well under this unexpected separation; acknowledging the propriety and sound judgment displayed in the arrangement made by the High Priest.

At each city, as the pageant passed, the Hittite Princess, at Hotep's command, took her place beside the Nile god; and each time the captivating figure received an ovation from the multitude that was highly gratifying to her, notwithstanding the sorrowful conditions under which it was obtained. Hotep, after each exhibition of the Bride, would escort her to her private apartment and there leaving her, would return to the main deck with a peculiar smile playing about his mouth and say quietly:

"It is well. I am satisfied."

When the fleet arrived at Memphis a short halt was made. As the royal vessels, and those of the priests and escort, laid by, the other craft that had joined the procession, passed through and continued toward On, now but a short distance away. Hotep passed over to the barge of Aahmes and after salutations were exchanged, Pharaoh took the High Priest aside.

"How does the captive maiden bear herself at this time?" said Aahmes in a tone that betrayed more than passing interest.

"Nobly, O King! Never have I seen such womanly courage."

"Has Hotep found no excuse for Pharaoh that he might yet save the daughter of Apepi?"

"At this time the King cannot retract. She has been seen by thousands as we came down the river. She is known to all the court,

and to place another as the Bride, will surely bring calumny upon the head of the King."

"Pharaoh would confess to the High Priest. Sleep has forsaken his pillow, and unrest destroys the pleasure of day. There was a time when the Hittite could have been saved, and Pharaoh did it not. His heart was evil and he hardened himself against the captive. Now, when he would that she might live, his hands are tied. Pharaoh bows his head in shame."

"Bear up, O King! Let not thy thoughts be disturbed too greatly. Ammon Ra has spoken to Hotep and showed him the heart of the King. The great god is easily touched and he knows the frailty of man. Turn aside, O King, from troublous thoughts, for naught can now come of them. Reparation belongs to the future."

"Be it as the High Priest says. Pharaoh will stand before the people and approve the

ceremonies about to take place. I have sent for Nebka, that we may consult with him."

"May it please the King to hear his servant Hotep, and grant his request. Before proceeding to On, I desire to speak privately with Lord Nebka, and I ask that he may at this time visit me for that purpose."

"Pharaoh gladly complies with the wishes of Hotep. Remain, however, and join in our consultation, which will be brief. Already Nebka comes."

As the young lord came on board, he received a hearty welcome. Although these three had been seldom together, there was that congeniality in mind, rank and natural ability, that made the meeting somewhat informal, and prepared the way for the utterance of such things as each desired to say, without hindrance or delay. The conversation centered about the general conditions of northern Egypt; how the new government stood in the eyes of the people; what preparations had

been made for, and what interest had been exhibited in the coming festival and its ceremonies. Nebka displayed his old time clearness of thought and elegance of expression, and the conference was soon closed in a highly satisfactory manner. Hotep and the young lord were then rowed to the opposite side of the river, where laid the boat of the High Priest, and in a few minutes Ben Ammi, who had been requested to join them, was present. Nebka noted the manly bearing, the keen eye, the alert movement that belonged to the soldier, still present beneath the priestly garb. Hotep began:

"This is Ben Ammi, the Hebrew. He was made captive by your forces at Avaris. With him was a woman—a Hittite Princess."

Nebka's face lighted up with the recollection of that night on which they were brought into his headquarters.

"You will remember that Aahmes, at our suggestion, placed them temporarily with his

household servants. I have seen them often since, and I have learned to respect them for their noble qualities. The Hittite is to be the Bride of the Nile."

As Hotep pronounced the last sentence in low, impressive tones, Nebka started slightly.

"Even now she is with me. The light of the Hebrew's heart is the Hittite. If the Nile claimed her not, she would be his bride. When the ceremonies at On are completed why should the Hebrew return to Thebes? The land of Goshen lies in sight; Pharaoh has turned the Hebrew over to me; why should I not set him down in the midst of his own people?"

Hotep paused and looked from one to the other as though noting the effect of his words. Ben Ammi replied:

"The High Priest is kind of heart, and mindful of the captive. I am not ungrateful, but return thanks for the kindness you have shown me. It may be well for me that I

should abide away from Pharach's court. As Hotep pleases, so will I do."

Nebka sat a moment in silence and then turned to Hotep.

- "Will Pharaoh approve?"
- "I know that he will."
- "Would the Hittite be satisfied in Egypt?"
- "She has no part in the matter, for to-morrow she embraces the sacred river."
- "Why should it be so! I will go to Aahmes and say, 'A new Bride will be found. One who is of high degree, and is in every way acceptable."
- "The king will turn a deaf ear and will reply, 'The Bride is the daughter of Apepi. She looks forward with joy to her wedding day. No bride is fairer; no rank is higher; let be as it is.'"
  - "Has she been seen by the people?"
- "By many thousands, as we descended the river."

"I fear then, you are right. There can be no change now."

All sat without speaking for several minutes, when Hotep, addressing Nebka, said:

"Let me bring her in." Then turning to Ben Ammi: "The Hebrew is a man, is he not?"

"I shall not make the High Priest ashamed," answered Ben Ammi.

Hotep left them for a few moments, and returned with the Hittite walking beside him. Two slaves carried a throne seat and placed it on the deck. The High Priest with great solemnity led her to it, and she sat among them, a Princess indeed, calm, self-possessed and beautiful.

"The daughter of Apepi remembers the noble Nebka?" said Hotep.

The Hittite bowed in reply.

"I have brought him here to meet the Hebrew. The days are come when Ben Ammi should return to his people, for Aahmes will

not care to look upon him in Thebes. Nebka desires to go before Pharaoh in behalf of the Princess. If successful in pleading his cause, then might the Princess be restored to freedom, and remain here with the Hebrew. There is yet time to get another sacrifice."

The Hittite answered quietly yet firmly:

"The High Priest would place me as a supplicant before Pharaoh. That cannot be. The noble Nebka would risk his standing at court for one who can be nothing to him. I thank Lord Nebka and say, it must not be. Ben Ammi is brave, and thoughtful of the captive. At my request he would strike down the priest who shall pass me to the river, break the shackles from my feet, and die in attempting to carry me away in safety. I desire it not. Ne-fert-ari has said to me, 'Hotep is good.' She has said, 'Whatsoever the High Priest asks of thee, do it.' Hotep does not ask me to do these things. The daughter of Apepi will not disappoint Ne-fert-ari.''

A sigh of relief escaped the High Priest; Ben Ammi stood with lips firmly set and muscles as rigid as iron; Lord Nebka seemed fascinated with the words and manner of the Hittite. Then Hotep's voice was heard in its full, impressive and prophetic tone.

"It was night, and the altar stood in the camp where the Hebrew and the Hittite sat with Hotep. The voice of Ammon Ra spoke to the High Priest, and he prophesied of the captives; holding open the book of their lives. that they might read therein. And as he then said, so has it been until now. Shall not Ammon fulfill all else which he said? Then must the Hittite Princess be offered up as the sacrifice—the daughter of Apepi must be the Bride of the Nile. But hearken and remember, that on the same night when these words were spoken it was also said, 'When the allotted years have been passed with Osiris, you shall come again to this place.' Now, as all the words of Ammon Ra which pertained to your

present life are about to be fulfilled, I again speak the words that shall come to pass far, far in the future. The Hebrew, the Hittite and the High Priest will meet again on the plain where Aahmes camped, and the meeting will be one of joy."

At a sign, the slaves removed the seat, as Hotep returned the Princess to her room. Ben Ammi passed over to his own boat, and Nebka conversed some time with the High Priest over the circumstances that had brought about the present condition of the two captives."

#### CHAPTER XIII.

#### The Bride of the Nile.

T was a semi-barbaric scene that was displayed at the sacrifice to the Nile. the city of On was the great educational institution of the Egyptian nation, and here also was one of the most magnificent temples to be found in any part of the land. center of learning and of religious luxury, belonging to a civilization that led the world, was now the center also of a festival that was directly opposite to all our ideas of morality. On this day were assembled at this great city, all classes of citizenship, from Pharaoh on the throne, to the vulgar boatman who quarrelled for the right of way; citizens drawn from the great expanse of country reaching from the ancient City of Thebes to the many mouths of the Delta.

The streets were thronged with people on 159

foot, pushing toward the river front, while chariots carrying princes, nobles and military officials dashed recklessly by; and chairs carried on the shoulders of slaves, pressed through with their burdens of lords and ladies, painted. perfumed and bejeweled for the occasion. On all the housetops affording any opportunity for a view of the river, were assembled hundreds—yes, thousands, who, as they sat in holiday attire vivaciously enjoying the gathering of the multitude, were eyed with envy by those less fortunate. Opposite the city, moored against the bank, were the royal boats, brilliant in their gaudy paint and decorations of many colors; while grouped on either side were the court retinue and the aristocracy of the land.

It was a grand out-pouring of the nation, and for what? A human victim was to be offered as a sacrifice for the propitiation of the sacred river—a Princess of the last Hyksos Dynasty was to be made the Bride of

the Nile. This offering, made to secure the favor of the river, and thereby reap rich rewards from the overflow, was naturally entered into with fervor, by a people whose religious ideas permeated their every day life. even though that life was not purified thereby. With thoughts exalted to a god who rightly claimed an offering from his worshippers for the benefits he conferred, they failed to see that in an effort toward a purer life, they could make an offering that would indeed be a sacrifice. The barbaric accompaniment to this offering was so hidden under the peculiar civilization then existing, that the ceremony blossomed out as a spontaneous and praiseworthy manifestation of loyalty to the gods; and the inhumanity, that to our generation stands forth so prominently, was lost to sight in the fanatical contemplation of a religious splendor.

At all times it had been a ceremony of supreme interest to the people; but on this oc-

casion there was added the glorious halo of a new birth to the nation, that clothed it with a national as well as a spiritual importance. Therefore, on this day the rolling drums and blaring trumpets of the military mingled their warlike sounds with the chants and incense of the priests; and the glittering spear points, so lately dipped in blood, lifted themselves above the heads of the gilded gods, as processions moved through the streets and took their places for the great sacrificial act.

All things being in readiness, the sistrums rang out among the priests, and in ever increasing volume their strong voices rose upon the air as they chanted the hymn to the Nile.

"Bringer of food! Great Lord of provisions! Creator of all good things!
Lord of terrors and of all choicest joys!
Are all combined in Him.
He produceth grass for the oxen,
And provides victims for every god;
The choicest incense he too supplies.

Lord of both regions,
He filleth the granaries; ne enricheth the store-houses;
He careth for the estate of the poor."

As these words swelled out, and the great audience stood expectantly and reverently, the boat of Hotep came from the shore a short distance above and turned down the stream. All decorations that embellished the boat as it brought the sacrifice to On, had been removed; but in their stead were objects that now were far more attractive to the throng of excited worshippers. The Nile god, Hapi, still stood at the bow, while in the center, side by side, were Ammon Ra, representing the Theban Temple, and Tum, representing the Temple at On.

Incense burned in golden bowls about each of the latter, perfuming the air and wrapping in its ever changing clouds, the forms of the slaves who stood ready to do the High

Priest's bidding. Beside the Nile god stood the Hittite. Her arms were lightly bound to her sides, and cords, to which weights were attached, were fastened about her ankles. Other than this, she appeared the same as when, at the call of Hotep, she stood in all her sweet and inspired attractiveness, before those who flocked to see her on the journey down the river. Fresh garlands of flowers added brilliancy to her drapery, and no pallor of fear encroached upon the roseate glow that tinted her fair young cheek. Turning neither to the right nor to the left, she stood erect and confident, with her resolute gaze fixed unflinchingly ahead to the spot where she would soon be offered to the turbid waters. even as she had seen others pass away in the robes of the Bride.

By her side stood Hotep, grave and dignified; his clean linen attire partly covered by the rich leopard skin, while his head was adorned with quivering ostrich plumes.

Utterly oblivious to all the pomp and magnificence that lined the shore and made a brilliantly beautiful back-ground against which his boat floated, he, like the Princess beside him, seemed above and beyond the conditions that surrounded them, as they stood out in bold relief, the ideal Priest and Sacrifice.

The boat cast anchor in the middle of the river, opposite Pharaoh, who sat upon a richly ornamented throne in the midst of the imperial party; and a thrill of admiration passed through the multitude, during the few moments in which the tableau stood before it. Hotep, without delay, stepped to the god Hapi, and as he poured out a libation of wine, the sistrums again sounded, and the voices of the priests were heard as the hymn to the Nile continued.

"He causes growth, to fulfill all desires; He wearies not ever of it. He wipeth away tears from all eyes; He careth for the abundance of his blessings."

Then swinging his censer until the graceful clouds of incense partly enveloped the Hittite Princess, the High Priest motioned two of the slaves, who, coming forward, immediately carried her to the edge of the boat and stood, one on each side, in an attitude of support. Again the chanting of the priests rose solemnly and every eye was fixed upon the Sacrifice. Not a muscle moved as she waited calmly and majestically between the slaves. The same pression of quiet resolve in the set lips and steady eye, was now hers, as at the first. same radiant beauty that won the admiration of the multitude as she descended from Thebes, now captivated the immense throng that awaited breathlessly the final act. erently Hotep advanced and poured a small quantity of wine upon her head, as the two slaves lifted her up with loving hands, and gently put her over the side of the boat.

The daughter of Apepi passed like a queen to her Bridal couch—the beautiful Hittite lay

wrapped in the embrace of the Nile—on the sacred waters floated the rose and the lotus bloom.

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# HOTEP: A DREAM OF THE NILE.

BOOK II.



#### CHAPTER I.

The Hermit of the Hillside.

T the close of a beautiful day, with a gorgeous sunset illuminating the Nile Valley, Machi stood for the first time on the bank of the river at Cairo. He was a young, impressionable Israelite, sufficiently familiar with the history and traditions of Egypt, to make an air of mystery easily attach to all that he did not fully understand.

As he looked on the scene about him, his eyes rested upon an earthen pillar bearing the inscription, "The Bride of the Nile," which stood at the water's edge near by, with a gaily trimmed boat floating beside it. At first he viewed them with only such interest as he might have shown toward any ornamentation of the city, but soon he found himself drawn more positively to their consideration, until a strong desire seized him to know some-

thing of this Bride and of the pillar and boat that seemed commemorative of her. As the brilliant coloring of the sunset enveloped them in its soft embrace, they seemed to partly dissolve and a fascination which he could not resist took possession of him. Visions of the past floated dreamily through his brain, in which the Bride, the boat and the river were ever prominent, and himself indistinctly pictured upon the scene.

From this pleasing reverie he was suddenly recalled to the realities that surrounded him, by the feeling that some one was standing near, and turning he saw an old man with smoothly shaven face looking intently at him. His hair was tinged with gray, his shoulders were carried well back, and his eyes looked out clearly and keenly from beneath his overhanging brow. For a moment each looked at the other in silence, and then pointing toward the earthen pillar the old man said quietly:

"You seem interested in the monument before us."

The tone was respectful and dignified, and although Machi was somewhat surprised by this abrupt address from a stranger, he replied courteously:

"I am indeed interested, and yet I could not tell you why."

"Nor do you know," said the old man, "why I feel impelled to approach you on such a subject."

Here he paused and inclining his head toward Machi, continued in a still softer tone, but with great positiveness.

"It is because of my connection with the story of the Bride, and my desire to discharge an obligation connected therewith."

Machi looked inquiringly into the face of the stranger at this assertion of his connection with an event in which he had become so suddenly interested, and for a few moments neither of them spoke. Then the old man

resumed in a tone slightly tinged with contempt:

"They will tell you," sweeping his hand around as though referring to the inhabitants of the city, "they will tell you that when the great Amru established himself over Egypt, he found here an annual sacrifice of a young woman, by drowning in the river. The ceremony of the sacrifice was one of solemn pomp, and the woman was called, 'The Bride of the Nile.' They will tell you that the followers of the Prophet, moved by their high moral and religious ideas, looked in horror on this offering to the great river and finally abolished it; and that this column was erected to commemorate the old sacrifice, amid the festival ceremonies that are now observed at the rise of the Nile."

"And is it not true?" queried Machi.

Looking intently at the young Israelite as the twilight closed about them, he replied quietly but with apparent emotion:

"You do not bow to Allah!"

"I do not," said Machi, smiling at the intensity of feeling shown in the tone and manner of the stranger.

The incident was nevertheless impressing him in a peculiar manner; and while he was inclined to look upon the old man as perhaps of unbalanced mind, he could not quite overcome the feeling that he might be on the eve of some discovery relating to the distant past. The darkness was now gathering, and the words of the stranger were still more impressive as in earnest and distinct tones he continued:

"If you care to know the true story of the Bride of the Nile, you will come to me where I make my abode. Yonder where the mountains are yet visible along the outskirts of the city, you will find half way up the slope, a small grove and garden. There will I await you."

"I thank you very much," replied Machi,

"but my time in Cairo will be fully occupied, and I fear I may not rightfully use it, even to gratify my desire for more complete knowledge of a subject to which I am strangely drawn."

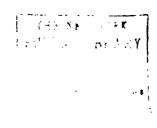
With his hand extended toward the monument, his head thrown slightly back and his eyes looking beyond the pillar into the far distance, the stranger said:

"I have not offered the opportunity to hear this story to any one before. The secret of the Bride of the Nile is with me. The Israelite shall know it, or it shall be known to none. Within three days he will depart from the city, but before that time he will visit me at my abode."

The speaker turned and moved away rapidly, while Machi stood like one in a dream. The earnestness of speech, the commanding attitude, and the positive assertion as to his own actions filled the Israelite with astonishment; and for some time he lingered



"The secret of the Bride of the Nile is with me.



near the spot, thinking deeply over the strange incident.

The next day, as he went about the business which had brought him to Cairo, his thoughts reverted frequently to the scene of the evening before, and, in his unemployed moments the old man and his mysterious words forced themselves upon him with ever increasing power. It was without doubt, a firmly fixed fact in the mind of the stranger, that he held a secret connected with the event which the column commemorated: but in the bright light of day, away from the surroundings of the night before, Machi was more inclined to look upon all the assertions he had made as the outgrowth of some hallucination. There was presented, however, an opportunity for adventure, which was quite attractive, and the idea of visiting the old man in his home on the mountain side, took a stronger hold upon him than he would have been willing to admit.

It was perhaps the middle of the afternoon (12) 177

when he entered the place of business of Abdel-Rassan, an aged and respected citizen, who was born in Cairo and had lived there almost continuously since. If there were a trace of reserve in Ab-del-Rassan's manner and a lack of expression in his face, as Machi presented his letters of introduction, they softened and disappeared during the reading, and when he had finished, he turned to the young man with a pleased expression, and warmly welcomed him as the son of Gemalli, his true and valued friend in the years long past. An enjoyable conversation ensued, which continued with much interest until the afternoon was far spent.

Then it suddenly came to the mind of Machi that this man, who had for more than three score years dwelt in the city, might be able to tell something of the old man whose words and actions had made such an impression upon him. Looking from the door of the room

in which they were sitting, the mountain range which had been pointed out to him the night before, was close at hand, and half way up its side could be discerned the grove and garden that should mark the place of the old man's abode. Instantly the scene that so attracted him in the fading sunset was pictured before him, and the soft mysteriousness which at that time hovered about him, now exercised its persuasive influence until he heard, as though the stranger again stood beside him, the words:

"The secret of the Bride of the Nile is with me—the Israelite shall know it or it shall be known to none."

Turning to the Arab, and pointing toward the rocky range, he said:

"I saw last evening the mountains yonder capped with the brilliant and varying colors of the setting sun, and my soul was filled with the grandeur and beauty of the scene."

"A beautiful sight indeed," replied Ab-

del-Rassan, "and especially so when one sees it for the first time. Well do I recollect how, in my boyhood days, it seemed to me on such evenings that I was at the very gates of Paradise. But when the gorgeous illumination faded away, I was still in a land where sorrows and sighings ceased not, day nor night. Ah, my young friend, you may not see in all the world such glories as are presented at times by nature in the valley of the great river, nor yet in all the world may you find greater misery than man has made for his fellow man in this same down-trodden land."

Machi looked at the Arab in silence for a few moments, and then to encourage him to speak further and, if possible, along the line that now was most absorbing to himself, replied:

"To the beauty and the misery that seem natural parts of life here, may you not add mystery also? Though only two days have 180

passed since my arrival, yet I have seen enough to make one feel that the present contains somewhat of the mystery that we know belonged to the past."

"It is so—it is so," replied Ab-del-Rassan; and then looking toward the mountain range with more interest than he had hitherto shown, he continued:

"Half way up the side of the mountain which you noticed so particularly yesterday evening, you can see from here a grove. It will doubtless excite your curiosity to know that within its shade is hidden a cottage which is the lodging place of an old man and his male attendant. But when I go on to say that it is currently reported, and believed by many, that this old man is the successor of another who dwelt in this same place before him, and that he was the successor of still another, and so on back to the time when Amru took possession of the land as an officer of the great Prophet; then you will doubtless

feel that the mysteries of the past are indeed linked with a mystery of to-day."

The Israelite leaned forward with almost breathless interest, and listened closely to each word as the Arab spoke. His effort to know something of the stranger who had so deeply interested him at the monument, was more productive than he had hoped, and it was with some emotion that he addressed Ab-del-Rassan again.

"This is indeed on the border-land of the mysterious past, and my curiosity is greatly excited to know more of this hermit of the hillside. Whence comes this singular man?—for what purpose is he here and what name does he bear?—are questions that naturally arise in my mind."

"I must confess that these are all shrouded in darkness and I cannot answer."

"Am I then to know nothing more, after my hopes have been so seemingly near to realization? It would be useless for me to

try to hide the interest I take in what you have said, and my desire to know more of this old man."

"I can only tell you that which I hear. Common report gives to him and his predecessors the name Hatsupa, and tradition places the time of removal and succession at night."

"It is an attractive story to me, and I shall endeavor to learn from other sources, something more definite and extended, of the life and purposes of this Hatsupa."

When Machi left Ab-del-Rassan soon after, there was no doubt in his mind as to the course be should pursue. Whatever of superstitution entered into his character was fully aroused, whatever of imagination was busily at work. The unaccountable interest he had taken in the column the night before, the fascination which held him and led to visionary scenes of the past; the sudden appearance and confident words of the stranger; com-

bined to stir all that was emotional within him, and to make him feel that some unseen hand was guiding him to some proposed end.

Without further delay he started for the mountain-side grove, with all the enthusiasm of youth, though seriously considering the adventure that was before him. He recognized that he was, of his own volition, assisting in making true the positive assertion of the stranger that this visit would be made. realized that he was about to place himself in contact with one who had already exercised a powerful influence upon him in the short time they had stood together by the column. Yet he had confidence that his own selfcommand and keen intelligence would enable him to cope successfully with the hermit: and he counted the possibility of obtaining the secret of the Bride, as being well worth the encounter.

On reaching the grove he found, hidden among the shrubbery, what was to outward

appearances, a house of two rooms built against the sloping hillside. The servant admitted him, and in a few minutes the old man greeted him in a friendly yet dignified manner, and led the way into the adjoining room. From here by a door in the rear of the room, they passed out of the house proper, and into a small chamber which had been carefully hewn out of the stony range, on the side of which the house was located. Closing the door behind them, the stranger and the young Israelite were face to face, and alone.

The room was clean, with polished marble floor, and walls oramented with highly colored paintings and hieroglyphics copied from some ancient Egyptian text. At the rear of the room was hung a heavy curtain, which, when drawn back, disclosed an alcove where stood an Egyptian altar, and upon it a golden figure representing the god Osiris. A soft mellow light was thrown over all, by a number of richly decorated lamps of various patterns;

and near the entrance were a small table and two chairs, indicating that the old man knew his guest was coming. Here the two seated themselves, neither having spoken since entering the room. The eyes of the stranger flashed with unusual brilliancy, and his whole bearing was that of one about to meet with long sought success, while the Israelite seemed anxiously on the alert, and allowed no motion to escape him.

#### CHAPTER IL

#### The Beginning of the Secret.

T is not necessary that we should at this time be known to each other by our real names," said the old man quietly. "I am called Hatsupa and you are an Israelite."

"I am satisfied," replied Machi, "to have you withhold whatever in your judgment would be of no value to me. I have no desire to inquire into what does not concern me."

"All that has taken place since you first looked at the column last night, concerns you. But much more does this present visit, which I knew you would feel compelled to make. Remember well what Hatsupa shall say to the descendant of Abraham."

Machi gravely studied the old man, and did not fail to notice the rather egotistical address with which he saw fit to begin the interview, but made no reply. The same fascinating



tone and dignified manner were with Hatsupa now, that appealed to Machi as he stood by his side on the bank of the river the evening before; and while the Israelite controlled himself so that his manner was calm and collected, there crept over him a feeling of reverence for this hermit of the hillside, which placed him in that passive mood best calculated to give the old man's words their strongest effect. The voice that spoke was low and earnest.

"Many strange things have happened in this land since thy people dwelt under Apepi in Goshen. They went out from their Egyptian home a strong people, and made of themselves a mighty nation, to be scattered abroad afterward through many lands. When Apepi was vanquished and Aahmes reigned, Egypt took on a greater splendor than ever before, and afterward was bereft of her Pharaohs and all the glory she inherited from them. The Persian devastated her in his day; the Greek swept through the sacred valley and she



bowed to him; and the Roman stretched out his rod of iron over all her borders. These all passed away and then came the power of the Arab and the rule of the Memlook, which is now upon her. Centuries have passed since Apepi ruled as a Shepherd King, and thy kinsman Joseph sat at his right hand. But mysteries of those days have descended through all the ages of adversity to the present time. The Israelite is, incomprehensibly to himself, drawn toward them; and Hatsupa stands ready to reveal them."

The old man paused to note the effect of this speech, and Machi replied:

"These words are spoken because of the incident last evening. The inscription on the column, 'The Bride of the Nile,' awakened in me a more than ordinary interest for which I am unable to account. My presence and manner inspired in you thoughts that found but partial expression and left me much in doubt. I confess a strong desire to know the story

which you say you can tell, and I admit that there does not seem any reason why I should be thus moved."

"I will tell you why you are thus wrought upon in this matter. I can see why you have been deeply impressed by certain places and events since you came to this city. It has all happened to you that you might be made ready to meet me. I have the key to the mystery which, for some reason yet unknown to you, it is now your desire to penetrate."

"I was indeed impressed by your words the secret of the Bride of the Nile is with me; I listened with interest as you asserted that you stood ready to reveal the secrets of the past. The words are strong, but in what manner will Hatsupa show the truth of his speech?"

"The Israelite saw Ab-del-Rassan this day, and the Arab could not tell him of me, as to whence I came or how I work,—yet I know Ab-del-Rassan and he cannot hide himself

from me. So too, it is not for the Israelite to have knowledge of how I am connected with the past; nor can he inquire of me that he may be convinced of the truth of my speech. Yet I know the Israelite, and he cannot cloak himself from my eyes."

The old man had spoken with some show of spirit, and his eyes looked into those of Machi with an expression that betrayed a feeling of superiority and control. For a moment he sat thus, and then rising slowly he moved to the altar and standing before the golden Osiris, he addressed the god in tones audible to the Israelite:

"Osiris, before whom all come for justification, hear the words of Hatsupa. The Arab of the plain draws near to the Israelite. I am inquired of as to the mystery of the past. I have followed in the footsteps of those before me and now is the time of fulfillment. Direct me now, Osiris, that my trust may be

completed and thy truth openly known among men."

To Machi it seemed that the old man was trying to avoid what he had promised during this meeting, and was drifting away into generalities that could be of little interest, and of less value. He therefore felt some irritability at being drawn so strongly toward this stranger, who might at last prove to be but a dreamer or an enthusiast; and he spoke with a slight show of impatience.

"I have come as you said I should. You have not yet fulfilled your promise as to the secret of the Bride."

"The Israelite grows restless." Again Hatsupa's voice was soft and persuasive. "I have said he should know the secret, but I have not said I would tell it here. This time is well spent, if I but so secure his attention that he will have at least partial faith in me. The story will not be told unless the Israelite so wills it; but if it is not told to him, it will

be told to none. It will be told in parts, by different people, and in different places; and when the Israelite hears any part thereof it shall be given him to recognize it. The great mystery of Osiris is over and about us, binding the past to the present, and the secret of the Bride of the Nile will be known in full in the day when the truth of Osiris shall be established."

Hatsupa again seated himself, and Machi replied:

"Pardon me if I spoke hastily. That which you have said inclines me to believe there is a story of the past for me to know. It requires not this meeting with you to awaken an interest in the story you have promised; nor to make stronger my desire to penetrate the veil that hides the mystery of the past. All that was born in me as we stood in the fading light beside the column. If my faith is not strong, if my heart rebels at times, remember it not against me."

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"You have well spoken. The days are at hand when your desire to know the mystery which connects your life with mine will be gratified. I shall not appear unto you again until the story you are to hear has been told; but in the day when it is completed, I shall in person tell you the secret of the Bride."

With these words Hatsupa rose, and as Machi stood beside him he continued:

"Hatsupa turns to Osiris, his advisor—the Israelite departs in peace—the story of the secret is begun."

He then opened the door and Machi passed out through the cottage into the grove.

The sun was sinking in the west. Already his mellow rays were encircling with halos the minarets of the mosques and the ragged points of the mountain side, while in the distance the column of the Bride of the Nile was taking on the shades of color that enwrapped it the evening before. For a moment Machi stood in contemplation of the beautiful scene

before him, and then turned toward the cottage. No one was in sight, not a sound was to be heard, and the doors and windows were tightly closed.

#### CHAPTER III.



S Ab-del-Rassan opened his place of business the next morning, a young woman of graceful form, with dark eyes that looked out searchingly, yet feelingly, and with black hair that framed a comely face, came in from the living apartments of the house.

"I salute you, my beloved Uncle," she said, in a cheerful and respectful tone.

"I am glad to see my little maiden, my own Ayesha," replied the Arab, with much warmth of feeling.

"Always looking after wares and arranging for sales. How wise you look as preparations are being made. But I know something my Uncle has not yet discovered."

"That might easily be true; pray what is your secret?"

"The Israelite who came yesterday under your roof, has gone from the city."

"How know you this!"

"I saw him from my window as he passed down the road toward Bubastis."

Ab-del-Rassan went through the room mechanically arranging his goods. This sudden announcement by his niece, turned his thoughts to the events of the day before, and he recalled distinctly the interest manifested in the old hermit, by Machi, and the curiosity that had led the Israelite to go to the grove, while the Arab watched him from his door. For a moment the maiden was forgotten as he thought of the power which Hatsupa seemed to have exercised over Machi. Ab-del-Rassan had never seen any, except the two solemn occupants of the cottage in the grove. climb the rough hillside until now. had penetrated the seclusion of this mysterious person and immediately had gone from the city, although when he left the Arab, he

showed no intention of departing without another interview. From such thoughts as these he was recalled by the maiden, who spoke with some impatience:

"Does my uncle take no interest in the departure of the Israelite? I can tell him something else which will be new to him. Hatsupa is gone also."

"Hatsupa gone!" cried Ab-del-Rassan in amazement.

"He is gone—the Israelite is gone—is it not proper that it should be so?"

"How know you this, my child? I wonder much at the knowledge you have, which seems to connect the Israelite with the hermit."

"My beloved Ab-del-Rassan, many strange things have occurred lately. Hatsupa called upon you about a week ago and you thought the visit was hidden from me; but listen, my uncle, and pardon. I met him unexpectedly as he left. He spoke quickly and positively to me and this is what he said: 'An Israelite

is coming thither, a stranger to this city and all within it. He will inquire of your uncle concerning me, and depart suddenly. Ab-del-Rassan will be astonished; his niece will be disturbed by reason of it; but Hatsupa will rejoice in that day.' O my beloved uncle, what means all this which has come upon me? The Israelite appeared and is gone, even as Hatsupa said he should do. Now the cottage on the mountain side is vacant and the hermit has disappeared. He has said that I would be disturbed in this matter, but tells not why; and I tremble for that which may happen next. Although I have never met the Israelite, there comes to me a desire to warn him of Hatsupa, and yet the hermit looks not like one who is seeking to do evil. My soul is stirred within me, my thoughts will not be controlled and I come to my uncle in tears."

Ayesha rose and threw her arms about the Arab's neck.

"My dear child,—my heart's delight! Do not permit your imagination to so move you. Put aside such disturbing thoughts and tell me how you know of the absence of the Israelite and Hatsupa. Tell me all that has happened since the sun went down yesterday."

"Ah, my kind uncle, I know you love me even as when I was indeed your little maiden. I will tell you what has happened. night, about the hour of midnight, I was awakened suddenly from my sleep. moon crept through my windows and my eyelids refused to close. I arose and looked out into the night. All was still and soft in the moonlight, but quickly I was aware of moving forms upon the mountain side, and my heart stood still as I saw Hatsupa and his attendant descending. I could not turn away my eyes from watching them, and I saw their faces, solemn and cold, as they passed close to the house and then disappeared in the shadows. Afterward sleep refused to come to me, al-

though I returned to my bed. In the early morning came the sound of horses' feet, and I heard one ask where the Israelite might be found,—he who was with Ab-del-Rassan the day before. Our neighbor pointed him the way, and as I watched by the casement, I shortly saw the Israelite and he who asked, ride rapidly away toward the north. I could not sleep,—perhaps I should not have looked out. Pardon me if I have erred in your sight, my dear uncle."

Ab-del-Rassan for a moment placed his hands caressingly upon her head, and with a deference that was almost worshipful, seated her again and said:

"Ayesha, pride of my old age, there is naught of wrong in you. The story reveals nothing that is improper. It has been granted you to see while an old man slept, but it will be well to keep it secret from others. Now let me relate that which will be at once a part of your story, for as I opened

the door this morning, I found what seems, in the light which your narrative throws upon it, a message from Hatsupa."

The Arab took from a table near by a small piece of parchment on which was written

Both knew it to be an Egyptian hieroglyphic; yet neither could tell its meaning, and as they sat in silence, carefully studying it, they were fully convinced that the hermit had left it during the night. The maiden spoke:

- "Will my uncle keep the writing?"
- "I do not think it is meant for me."
- "Then it would not have been left with you."

"Neither has it been left with me, but simply at my house. Ayesha abides with me,—to her has Hatsupa spoken. To her has he made a prophecy. May he not convey a message by the parchment also? I doubt not this writing is for you, and I give it you with con-

fidence that when the proper time comes, you will know what use to make of it."

She took it reverently, saying:

"The Israelite is gone,—Hatsupa is gone; what would my uncle do if I also should go?"

The face of the Arab was solemn; his mouth was firmly set; his eyes looked openly into hers. As though about to impart a blessing, he placed his hands upon her head.

"Ab-del-Rassan forgets not his promise to his brother. His love for Ayesha is very great. He trusts her as he would himself, and rejoices in that which pleases her. If she desires to go, let her open her heart to him, and whatever seems best for her, that will he do, though he suffer."

"Not now, my beloved uncle, not now would I go away. Your great kindness to me forbids that I should in the least offend or hurt you. I do not feel that I should ever ask of you to let me go away from you. But strange dreams come to me, and at such times Hatsupa

seems with me, and he beckons me to follow him. I do not wish to leave you, my dear uncle, but if I should be taken away—''

She did not finish the sentence, but stood irresolute for a moment, and then retired to her room.

Ab-del-Rassan resumed his work, and the strange circumstances that had so suddenly been forced upon him, kept his mind fully occupied as he moved among his bales and boxes. Hastily there passed before him the visit of the hermit from the mountain side, and its connection with Ayesha, which he had but just heard from her lips. Then his thoughts reverted to Machi who manifested such unusual interest in the mysterious, and to Hatsupa, who had for so long led a hermitlike existence, to at last open his doors to the young Israelite. Both were now gone; suddenly and without any reason that he could assign; the one leaving him no word of explanation, the other leaving him that which

he could not understand. The more he thought of all this the more perplexing it became, and the farther he seemed from any reasonable solution of the difficult problem thrust upon him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### Ghasseh.

S the days passed, Ayesha and her uncle frequently examined the Egyptian hieroglyphic, and talked of the strange old man, the handsome young Israelite, and the singular disappearance of both so quickly after their first meeting. they had become so closely identified with the life of the Arab maiden as to make them the centers about which revolved the hazy thoughts of her daylight reveries and the fantastic creations of her dreams at night. So completely was she controlled by the idea that some mysterious relation existed between Hatsupa and the Israelite which threatened to involve her also, that these dreams became as visions vouchsafed by Allah. Through them she sought to penetrate the future, and because of them she became closely observant of inci-

dents that might otherwise have passed without notice. Such thoughts and impressions soon began to affect her seriously, and the bright face and joyous laughter that once lighted with pleasure the hearts of all who knew her, were gradually absorbed in the wistful look and almost inaudible sigh, that now seemed ever with her. Had her surroundings been those of the home of her childhood, where a father's care and a mother's love could have sustained her, the events now drawing her into new relations with the world, might not have exercised such a sombre influence. But her present home with her uncle, pleasant though it was in many ways, had, as its strongest binding cord, naught but the affection and consideration of an old man, who had always dwelt alone.

Ab-del-Rassan had never married, nor had he lived in any very close relation with his kinsfolk. In a life devoted largely to trading, he had shown himself thoroughly capable, and

had acquired a comfortable fortune, at the same time gaining by his honesty and unassuming manner, the good will of all who knew him intimately. When his brother died, leaving but the one child, Ayesha, whose mother had passed away before, the old Arab had gladly consented to care for her as though she were his own daughter. Many times he had seen her at her home in the town of Ghazzeh, as she grew from a little child to maturer age, and as the years gathered about him it pleased him at times to call her his little maiden in memory of the innocent prattle and loving ways of her childhood. Soon after Abdel-Rassan brought her to his home. Machi arrived in Cairo, and the condition now confronting her had presented itself so unexpectedly, that she was unable to readily accommodate herself to the sudden change. From the first she had been impressed unfavorably by the circumscribed and depressing environment of a life in the city—a life so very dif-

ferent from the free and joyous existence that she had always known in her native town. Her meeting with Hatsupa, the arrival of Machi and the mystery that seemed to envelop both the hermit and the Israelite only served to increase the difficulty of harmonizing her surroundings; and when to this was added the mental strain produced by a continuous effort to account satisfactorily for the peculiar incidents now crowding so rapidly upon her, there naturally resulted a mood that led to a sadness bordering upon melancholy, which her uncle noticed with ever increasing uneasiness. Ab-del-Rassan therefore determined to return with her to Ghazzeh for a brief visit, in the hope that the renewal of old friendships among the fields and flowers of her childhood home, might restore to him the happy, contented maiden he had learned to love. Without delay his business was temporarily entrusted to an old and esteemed friend, preparations for the journey were quickly com-(14). 209

pleted, and again Ayesha beheld with a gladness that was almost childish the home she loved so much.

Thus it happened that late one summer afternoon Ab-del-Rassan and Ayesha stood on the southern slope of Ghazzeh, looking off southwestwardly toward Cairo. Near them were the ruins of the old church in which the Christians had worshipped long ago,-mute evidence of the great changes in the people and customs, wrought in even the later centuries. On the right, some three or four miles away, the waters of the Mediterranean shimmered in the sun, while far off to the east and north spread the productive acres that had been so often and so stubbornly fought for by Egyptian, Philistine and Hebrew. There was no evidence in the rambling streets and scant population to convince one of the ancient greatness of the place when it was a walled city, basking in the sun of prosperity. was tradition, and nothing remained to wit-

ness for its former life, except the tomb of the valiant Hebrew, who once carried off the gates of the city, and the partly out-lined race course where the Greek athletes had long before contested for empty honors. To Ayesha it was a place of pleasant memories, and as they conversed quietly beneath the shade of an olive tree, she pointed out to the old Arab locations that were of more than ordinary interest to her, and exhibited such animation and exuberance of spirits as were very gratifying to him.

While thus engaged, a man was seen in the distance riding toward Ghazzeh from the south. As he drew nearer both the Arab and his niece took a special interest in the rider, until at last Ab-del-Rassan turned from watching him, and said:

"It is the Israelite."

"The eyes of my uncle may be deceived."

"Not so—not so," said he, as he looked again toward the coming stranger.

"He may discover us. Let us retire," urged Ayesha.

"We need not be in haste. I am not sure that I desire to avoid him."

"He already turns this way, uncle."

"Which means we cannot leave, now that he has seen us."

And so they waited, with widely differing emotions, as Machi came directly toward them.

His salutation to Ab-del-Rassan was all that the Arab could desire in the way of respectful consideration, and it was with true, native dignity that he graciously returned it. Ayesha stood near with her dark eyes cast downward, her well formed features lighted up with the least flush of excitement, and her ears eager for any word that might be spoken. If Ab-del-Rassan felt proud of her as he presented her to the Israelite, the feeling was surely justifiable; and if the frank countenance and manly bearing of Machi made a favorable impression upon Ayesha, her beauty

in turn made his heart beat more rapidly, as he looked for the first time into her face. After this exchange of greetings, Machi addressed the Arab.

"I must apologize to Ab-del-Rassan, and place myself right in his eyes. My sudden departure from Cairo prevented me from calling upon you again as I had intended. To you, my action must have seemed rude indeed."

"I was much surprised that you should depart from the city so suddenly, when I had reason to believe that no thought of so doing was in your mind at the time you left me. I did not, however, look upon it as disrespectful under the conditions surrounding us."

"It pleases me to hear you say as much. While I had fully intended seeing you again, I could not consistently neglect important matters that suddenly demanded my attention elsewhere."

"It is indeed necessary, under all circumstances, to give proper attention to business

affairs; but now that I see you again there are many things I would like to hear from you. Allow me, therefore, to entertain you at my house."

"If I have gained favor so far in your sight, I am indeed honored. No greater pleasure could be mine than to accept such hospitality."

As they moved toward the home of Ab-del-Rassan the conversation continued.

"Do you know that Hatsupa left Cairo suddenly?" inquired the Arab.

"I know that he went away, but not that it was suddenly. I have not seen him since the day I visited him in his cottage."

"I watched you climb to the grove after you departed from my place of business that afternoon, and I was much interested because of that which we had said concerning the hermit. Great as was my surprise the next morning, to find that you had gone away, it was still more astonishing to learn that Hatsupa had

left the cottage during the night, as all others before him are said to have done. There is this difference: no one came to take his place, as tradition relates of his predecessors. The cottage is vacant—the garden is neglected—I have seen with my own eyes."

"Was there nothing left by which he might be traced? Nothing that would shed light on his mission?"

"I cannot say at present. Ayesha dwelt with me in Cairo. Whether by the will of God I know not, she saw Hatsupa and his attendant leave the hillside. Coming down silently at the hour of midnight, they passed under the shadow of my dwelling and disappeared. In the morning as I opened my place of business I found a small piece of parchment with Egyptian writing on it. To me it was an unintelligible message from the hermit, and in the light of other events, of which you know not, I could but think it was intended for

Ayesha. She holds it, awaiting the interpretation, if so be that it shall ever come."

Machi manifested the deepest interest in this brief recital and especially that part of it referring to the parchment. Instantly it occurred to him that the hermit had used it to excite in Ayesha a spirit of inquiry, as he had by his words at the column, aroused in him a desire to hear the secret of the Bride. A moment's reflection, however, made this seem improbable, and it was with conflicting emotions that he exhibited to the Arab a paper on which were Egyptian characters, and said:

"Does it resemble this?"

"It is the same. How came it to you? But wait, we are at the house. Let us enter and refresh ourselves."

#### CHAPTER V.

#### The Israelite's Story.

ATER in the evening, as the three sat together, the conversation was continued.

"You say you received the hieroglyphic at Bubastis," said Ab-del-Rassan, "and yet you tell me that you did not see Hatsupa there."

"It happened in this way," replied Machi.
"I had been in Bubastis but two days when I met the attendant of the hermit by chance upon the street. I have thought since that the fellow purposely put himself in my way, but at the time the meeting seemed purely accidental. I inquired as to where Hatsupa lived, and whether I might be permitted to see him. He hesitated a moment and then bade me come with him, saying he would grant my desire if possible. We soon reached the outskirts of the city and stopping before an an-

tiquated looking house, I was ushered into a small room scantily furnished. Asking me to be seated while he informed Hatsupa of my presence, the attendant at once disappeared; but returned almost immediately, bearing in his hand a notice from the hermit to await further instructions, as he had been called away suddenly. He also brought the parchment hieroglyphic, which he said Hatsupa had intended for me, and which it was his pleasure at this time to give me. The next day I went to the place again, hoping to see the hermit, but found the house unoccupied."

"If, then, the hieroglyphic is a message from Hatsupa, he has given to you and to Ayesha the same words, whether of friendship, or of enmity. As her protector I must see that his strange acts do not bring her into danger."

"I do not think there is any evil thought in him toward the maiden, but should it so develop, it will be my pleasure, with your consent, to assist you in her defense."

Ab-del-Rassan graciously acknowledged the chivalric offer of Machi and the eyes of Ayesha flashed a look of thanks for his interest in her welfare.

"But let us go back a little in your narrative," said the Arab. "I am quite anxious to hear of your meeting with the hermit, in his cottage on the hillside. Often had I asked myself why he should be there; and since our conversation my mind has been busy with the question more frequently. When I saw you go to his lodging, I hoped to learn from you at once something of his life and purpose; but in that I was disappointed."

"To tell the story of my visit to Hatsupa, I should begin with that which happened the night before. I was standing on the bank of the river, contemplating the pillar of the Bride of the Nile and the boat beside it, when I was suddenly made conscious of his presence. With a few words he secured my attention; a few more made me feel that he knew a secret

of the Bride; and then he vowed that it should be revealed to me, and that I would call on him to know of it. The next afternoon, when I left you, the words you had spoken brought back with power the words of Hatsupa, and I went to his cottage. He repeated that the secret was for me to know, but not unless I so desired. It would be connected with a story to be told to me in parts, by different people and in different places. After the interview, I returned to my lodging and early the next morning was called away to Bubastis."

"Then you did not find out any part of his supposed secret?"

"Nothing whatever. When I left him, however, he used these words, 'The story of the secret is begun,' and that which happened within a few days after my departure from Cairo, forced the remark upon me strongly. I had finished my business in Bubastis, and was about to turn my face homeward when I met a man who caused me to change my plans

entirely. He was a stranger to me, and as I afterward found, was not known to any in the He was well formed physically, erect in his bearing, keen of eye and quick of move-We were the only persons stopping that night at the inn, and he approached me 'Pardon me if I intrude. as I sat alone. You are a descendant of the Patriarch Abraham. I am from the line of ancient Pharaohs.' I saluted him gravely and he noticed the doubt in my face and manner. 'My statement as to myself,' continued he, 'requires some proof perhaps, before you can thoroughly accept it. May I take a portion of your time for that which I desire to say?' I assured him that my time was then quite unoccupied and that I should be glad to hear him further. He seemed well pleased for the privilege granted, and drawing a seat near me, at once began:

'There are those who, having been taught the Egyptian doctrine of Osiris, confidently

believe in a second life upon earth; others, who never may have heard of the doctrine. meet with experiences which make them feel that some of the scenes and faces, seen for the first time by them, are not unfamiliar. This feeling of a pre-existence on earth varies in degree, and the evidence supporting it is also of varying character. Whether heretofore any one has, in that second existence. been able to say what personage he was in his first life on earth, I do not know; but I do know that the second life is now mine, and that I have evidence which satisfies me that I was once a Pharaoh. Not only that, but circumstances show plainly to me, the name that I then bore; and I am proudly conscious that I am Apepi, the last of the Shepherd Kings, dwelling again among men. And if I have returned after fulfilling the days of Osiris, others too are here—a child of my first life should be among the living of to-day—the

spirit of a Bride of the Nile walking the earth again.'

"He paused a moment,—looked at me as though in doubt whether he should speak further,—and then continued:

'Although I have never been in this part of Egypt before, it is not entirely a strange land to me, for many places that I see for the first time, bring at once the strong impression that I have seen them before. Some controlling power impels me to go northeast from here, with the firm conviction that there I shall be still less a stranger, and shall find further evidence as to my station in the life long since lived. To-morrow I go. T have watched you, as you have gone about the city these past few days, and I feel drawn toward you so far as to ask you to accompany me. You will pardon my seeming rudeness in addressing you as I have done, but in that previous life a Hebrew loved the daughter of Apepi,

and in return was loved by her; and you are a Hebrew.'

"Instantly the words of Hatsupa rushed to my mind. Was this one of the instruments by which the story connected with the secret was to be revealed? The same sensations that came over me as I stood with the hermit by the pillar of the Bride in Cairo, controlled me now, and I readily consented to go with him.

"In the early morning we began our journey and as we went, the stranger seemed much elated with the prospect before him. Soon the landscape became somewhat familiar to him, and he pointed to a grove of palms, saying, 'There is where Jacob first pitched his tents in Egypt as he came under my protection.' Farther on we passed a stream running through a marshy field with cattle grazing along the edges, and he looked earnestly while he spoke quite excitedly.

'Ah, there is the place,—there is the place!

Have I not seen it—and the cattle—the lean and hungry kine that came up from its banks.'

"I ventured to say to him that he had read of these things until he had been deeply impressed by them; that while reading and studying them, he had so pictured their settings: that now a scene of similar character would seem familiar as a place known before. I went so far as to argue that while one might under some circumstances remember things of so long ago that they seemed to have been blotted from the memory, yet never could one recall the things that had been once separated from him by death. But as I spoke, I looked away a short distance and beheld a little hut and a woman standing in the door. I cannot describe to you the emotions that swept over me at that instant, as I stood silently gazing on the scene. All about me was a strange land; a stranger stood beside me, but the hut I recognized. Memory pictured it far back in (15)225

the past—back until it seemed but a dream—and yet I knew I had seen it before."

Ayesha had listened intently to the narrative of Machi, and now sat inclined slightly forward, her eyes glistening and her face eager. The old Arab noticed her as she drank in the story with such extraordinary avidity, and spoke warningly as Machi paused in his recital.

"Does my child hear something that is like unto a dream? She will remember that our race believes not in dreams." Turning to Machi, he continued: "Whatever the Israelite says really happened, that we believe, but the impressions made upon you were doubtless the result of the peculiar circumstances then surrounding you. The Israelite is more impulsive than Ab-del-Rassan. That you had seen the hut before, could only be said as of a dream."

Ayesha spoke reverently:

"Dreams we believe not, yet visions have

been vouchsafed Mahomet. Allah is good. May he not have shown the Israelite a vision but withheld the wisdom to interpret it?"

"God is indeed good," replied Machi, "and he has granted visions and spoken prophecies to his people. Whether my experience be from Him, I know not, but something tells me it is a part of the mystery which I now believe surrounds my life."

"There is a mystery about us all. This incident is but one link in the story which Hatsupa is telling in his own way. I have listened eagerly to the Israelite and I would hear more."

Machi resumed his narrative.

"The stranger noticed the changed expression that came over my face, and looking toward the hut, he said:

'A familiar sight in the land of Goshen, when the Hebrews dwelt there. I dare say you were particularly interested in it and I am not surprised. But let us move on.'

"We soon reached a place where a large expanse of country covered with mounds and other indications of the ruins of a city, attracted attention. The stranger looked about with eager gaze and carefully observed the surrounding country. Lakes partly filled with rubbish, canals overgrown with rushes, and the outline of walls that once enclosed many acres, marked the place as once a city of importance. As he looked upon it all, his face flushed and his manner had more of pride in it than he had yet shown. When he spoke, his voice betrayed suppressed excitement.

'Here for the first time in this life I now stand. I have looked forward to this hour with high hopes and great expectations, nor am I disappointed. How plainly the old city rises again before me. Yonder ran her massive walls—that huge, shapeless mass near the center was once the temple of Sutech—on the right stood the royal palace. Even now they all stand as clearly defined as though I had

often traversed these at present impassable streets and dwelt under the roofs that are now but a part of the desert about me. I am not a stranger here. In this place I once ruled as a Shepherd King—a Pharaoh of Egypt.'

"His voice dropped low, his manner became more subdued, and yet he spoke with more intense feeling than before.

'Here too my little child played in innocence; here she grew to be a maiden, fair and brave, who rode betimes with me in my chariot. From here they took her away to become the Bride of the Nile.'

"He stood with head bowed, his chest heaving with emotion, and for a time the place seemed like sacred ground. When at last I spoke to him, he turned with a startled expression, and said slowly:

'You are an Israelite, and I feel an interest in you for reasons which I have already named. Another time I shall speak to you on this matter, but not now.'

"As we returned to Bubastis his manner soon became genial again, and his conversation both pleasant and instructive. He was a scholar and a traveler, and the only thing on which he betrayed any weakness was the belief in his previous life on earth. With the history of Egypt at his tongue's end, his hallucination grew constantly, and the narratives and traditions of the country became facts to him, in which he had taken part centuries be-I left him to pursue my homeward fore. journey, and had it not been for the sight of the hut in the field, and the stranger's assertions as to the Bride of the Nile, the whole affair would soon have passed from my mind. As it is, the Bride, Hatsupa and myself seem to be more and more inextricably involved."

"But," said Ab-del-Rassan, "you believed not in what else he said to you of his other life; why should his mention of the Bride impress you? And why should the sight of an

ordinary hut in a far off field turn your brain? Let the Israelite be himself."

"Perhaps it is a weakness of which I should be ashamed. Perhaps the impression made by Hatsupa is due to a disordered mind."

"Let us wait," said Ayesha. "It is not for us to say now what all this means. Hat-supa works in his own way—we cannot understand—let us wait."

#### CHAPTER VI.

### A Stranger's Death.

ACHI remained at Ghazzeh for several days, making short excursions at times into the country near by, but spending the most of his time in the town. They were days full of the pleasurable companionship of Ab-del-Rassan, during which the Israelite grew in favor with the Arab, who in return, received from his guest the homage which comes of the highest respect and esteem. But still more were they days in which there seemed a special delight; a softer light to the sun, and a balmier breath to the breeze, because they had dallied with the fair maiden Ayesha. In those days an idol was set up in his heart and he worshipped before the dark eyes that held in their depths so much more for him now than when he first looked into them. Nor had the maiden es-

caped the subtle influence that hid in the very atmosphere about them; for as the brief hours sped by, she grew to feel more and more that she had met in the Israelite, one who approached her ideal man. More than once the impulsive Machi sought opportunity to declare his love, but as though divining his intent, she made such a climax impossible. The promptings of her own heart toward Machi and her sense of duty to Ab-del-Rassan, made it clear to her that she could not now consent to be his, and she shrank from placing herself in such an attitude as would mar in the least the pleasure of her uncle's guest.

When at last the Israelite said his farewells, he had completely lost his heart, yet had he nothing that he might rightly claim in return; and as he rode away, Ayesha watched with more than interest, half wishing that he had not left her. Surrounded, however, by the friends of her childhood, amid the familiar scenes of the little old town she

loved, the face of the Israelite ceased to have prominence in her thoughts; and her cheek recovered the bloom of health, while her graceful form rounded symmetrically under the invigorating influence of outdoor life. Again came the brightness of eye, the elasticity of step, and the cheerful manner, that belonged to the days when her father yet lived; and it pleased Ab-del-Rassan to have it so.

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One afternoon, soon after her return to Cairo, as Ayesha was in an upper chamber, her attention was attracted by the noise of horses' hoofs in the street below, and looking from the window she saw El-Ashraf, the Memlook ruler of Egypt, accompanied by his mounted escort, riding rapidly toward the house on his way to the imperial palace. It was an attractive and exhilarating sight as the finely formed, highly bred steeds swept along the street, with their brightly attired riders

sitting them so gracefully as to seem a part of the intelligent animals that bore them.

As Ayesha appeared at the window, a man of middle age, a little above the average height, with erect, military bearing, and features denoting intelligence of more than common order, stepped into the street with the intention of crossing over to the store of Ab-del-Rassan. He seemed so deeply absorbed in thought as to be utterly oblivious to the rapidly approaching horsemen, and when he discovered them so close upon him, he stopped suddenly as though unable to decide whether to move forward or to retrace his steps.

It all occupied but a few seconds. The riders swerved as quickly as possible when the stranger made his unexpected halt, but it was too late and he was thrown and trampled under the horses' feet, amid exclamations of warning and cries of horror from those who were looking on. Ab-del-Rassan was among

the first to reach him and the stranger was carried unconscious into the house of the Arab. Medical aid was summoned at once and under skillful treatment he soon recovered sufficiently to articulate indistinctly.

- "Am I near the place where the accident occurred?"
- "You are now in the house directly opposite where you were standing," replied the Arab.
  - "Then you are Ab-del-Rassan."
  - "I am."

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"I feel that my time is short. My soul will soon return to God. Before I go, you should hear me."

As he spoke, his voice increased somewhat in strength, until it was faintly audible to Ayesha, who stood by an open door in the room adjoining. Instantly she gave close attention, that she might hear all that was said, as he proceeded:

"At Bubastis, not long since, I met an Israelite. I told him that I must have lived 236

on earth long years ago—a life previous to this. Many places that I had never seen in this body had a familiar appearance to me. Many people whom these eyes had never looked upon before, seemed vaguely connected with some distant past of mine. I noted well these places and persons, and the emotions that stirred me when in contact with them. I became convinced that I must have been-" The face of the stranger paled, his eyes closed wearily and his voice died away in a whisper. Restoratives were quickly administered, and while this was being done, the maiden passed into the room. She had caught enough of the few words spoken to create in her a strong desire to be near the speaker. Under an irresistible impulse, she moved quickly toward the old Arab and stood with him beside the stranger. Slowly responding to the stimulating remedies, he continued with much effort, his eyes still closed

that the present surroundings might not obscure his vision of the past.

"I must have been the last of the Shepherd Kings of Egypt. Then I told the Israelite that if this should be true, the daughter of my former self was a Bride of the Nile. The Israelite did not believe, and yet I saw him start when his eyes beheld a hut standing in a field—"

Again the voice failed, and the stranger's breath came gaspingly. Ayesha involuntarily drew nearer and the face of Ab-del-Rassan twitched convulsively as he listened to the narrative, and thought of the night when Machi had related the same peculiar story. The voice again resumed.

"However, that is nothing. I promised the Israelite that I would some day talk with him again of those things, and I came to Cairo for that purpose. He is not here. The words which would mean so much to him may never be spoken, and those which I am about to utter

must fall into other ears—the ears of Ab-del-Rassan, his friend."

Once more he paused and gathered his remaining strength for the task before him.

"I am living here a second time and I doubt not others are doing the same. places and people, that bring recollections of past acquaintance, impress me as those which were familiar to me when I sat upon the throne of Pharaoh. One whom I ought to know, if I should meet her in this second life, is the daughter I then loved. Somewhere among the striving, restless multitudes that inhabit the earth, she is now living. years I have prayed that her lot might be cast in pleasant places, and that I might be permitted to look upon her before I again pass away. Through all my journeyings I have watched for the face from which should shine her re-incarnated spirit. It would thrill me with joy as I recognized it. My soul

would speak to hers in a language of its own, until she would know it—and me."

His strength was rapidly going and he paused exhausted by the effort just put forth. Perspiration stood upon his forehead. features were drawn in pain. The maiden inclined her head and with eager look, awaited his next words. The old Arab laid his hand softly upon the shoulder of his niece and bowed his head upon his breast. The silence of death hovered over the room. Slowly opening his eyes, the dying man looked for the first time into the face of Ayesha, as she bent forward with eyes glistening and cheeks grown pale under the excitement that now stirred her. As he met her earnest gaze, he perceptibly, his hands spasmodically and for an instant he lay motionless, with his eyes looking fixedly into Ayesha drew still closer; her breath came with short, uneven respirations; her form trembled under the emotions excited by

her strange and solemn surroundings. Gradually a wistful look overspread the countenance of the stranger, an expression of joyful recognition brightened his eyes and his lips moved convulsively in an effort to speak.

The hand of Ab-del-Rassan nervously tightened upon the arm of Ayesha as his unemotional soul was stirred by the over-powering influence that drew him closer to the moving lips, and held him under its subtle sway while they listened eagerly—almost longingly. But the words came not. The lustre of the eyes into which they looked faded,—the heart that yearned to express itself stood still,—the stranger was dead,

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#### CHAPTER VII.

### The Papyrus Roll.

IGHT was descending on the Nile valley as Hatsupa and his attendant, Abana, emerged from a house in a small village, nestled in a palm grove on the road leading from the ruins of Memphis toward the stony ridge lying to the west. Mounting their horses, they rode silentlythe half cultivated fields lying on either side, with here and there an uncared for rose tree or a neglected garden. Before them loomed up one of the great pyramids; while to the north and to the south could be seen other of these tombs of the Pharaohs, standing out against the sky like giant sentinels keeping faithful watch over the plain between them and the river Nile. To Hatsupa there came a feeling of sadness mingled with contempt for the Muslim power that now ruled the land.

Looking backward, he could see the mounds and temple columns which marked the site of the once wealthy and teeming city of Memphis, while before and around him were the barely traceable remnants of villa walls, the defaced tombs of an ancient race and the highways overgrown with underbrush; all bearing their testimony to the gradual destruction of that which made up the crown of glory, that once graced his nation's head. Nothing but traditions of the past greatness were now left to him-the worship of the revered Osiris was swallowed up by that of Allah and his prophet—the magnificence of a Theban court was lost forever in the insignificance of the Memlook Dynasties. All this and more. passed through the mind of the hermit as he drew near the wild, rough base of the mountain range. Here he dismounted and. leaving his horse in care of Abana, began carefully to pick his way up the hillside. Like one who was familiar with the locality, he kept

steadily on, passing to the right or left as some insurmountable obstacle was met, but always returning to the same general course, which finally led him to a narrow terrace half way up the ridge. Here he stood for a few seconds, that he might recover from the exertion just put forth, and then stooping down, he pushed aside the tangled growth and carefully removed a small stone which was loosely placed in the rocky ridge. This seemed to be the key by which to unlock the entrance to a cavernous recess, for he soon exposed a small opening leading into the mountain side. Through this opening he crept carefully, until he came to where it widened and its walls extended upward several feet to a ceiling of stone. Here he rose to his feet and stood in one of the hundreds of tombs that had been cut in the rocky slope, when it was the burial place for the dead of the great capital, Memphis, now lying in all

its desolateness on the banks of the Nile near by.

Having provided himself with a lamp for the purpose, the place was soon dimly lighted and the hermit immediately proceeded to the work which had brought him to this buried city of the dead. The floor of the apartment was still comparatively smooth, and the hieroglyphics on the walls were nearly all in such a state of preservation as to be decipherable. Directly in front of Hatsupa, could be seen an opening leading farther on into the mountain, and over which, in characters used by the Egyptians in the days of the Pharaohs, appeared the one word "Nebka." On his left was a similar opening, bearing above it in characters like the first, the name "Ben Ammi;" and toward this the old man turned his steps. Passing through the aperture, he entered a small apartment in which were arranged several mummied forms which greeted him with a solemn and impressive silence.

Hatsupa paused a moment, and giving way to his emotions, leaned against the side of the tomb.

"One more step in the mystery that has descended to me from the far past. Oft have I stood on the outer terrace; twice have I entered the first room of this tomb, that my faith might be strengthened. Now for the first time I look upon the forms of those with whom my trust is connected. The words of instruction are firmly fixed in my memory as I approach the final act.

'Enter the door over which is written Ben Ammi; and turn to the left. At the end of the chamber he will await your coming and will surrender the papyrus.'

"And now the time has come for which I have so anxiously waited. If everything here shall be found as written, then is my trust about to be ended, and the truth of the great god, Osiris, will soon be established. My heart beats high with great expectation and

my faith is not in the least shaken. I move—
I turn to the left—it is but a few steps—ah!
—Ben Ammi is before me."

As Hatsupa, with the manner and tone of an enthusiast spoke the last few words, he moved slowly toward the end of the chamber and stopped before a mummy case made of His mind was now firmly fixed upon the task before him, and there was no hesitancy in removing the outer case that readily yielded to his efforts. Then followed the other cases with their painted representations, —the name of the deceased, the Amenti heads, -all of which were familiar to him through his much study among the old tombs and Removing them carefully, one by one, he came at last to the pasteboard case, closely molded to the form, on which was painted the face of the person enclosed.

For a moment the emotion of the hermit was plainly manifest in the trembling hand that held the flickering light as he bent eagerly

over the form of the dead. For an instant his sallow face assumed a more deathly shade, and the deep set eyes dilated and glittered under the excitement that made the old man's breath come fast and labored. His perfect faith inspired him with a confidence that shut out all fear; and yet it did not quite prevent the shock that made him pause and shudder slightly as he looked upon the painted face which seemed alive under the uncertain flicker of the lamp. Quickly recovering, as he realized the important work yet before him. Hatsupa removed a part of the pasteboard covering from the chest of the mummy, thus disclosing the wrapped form with one arm lying across the breast, and in the hand the papyrus roll which he had come to obtain.

The re-action from the excitement incident to getting possession of that which to him, was so valuable, now began to be felt; and hastily removing the roll, he put back, as best he could, the half broken cases, passed out to the



"As he looked upon the painted face which seemed alive under the uncertain flicker of the lamp."

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terrace, replaced the stone and stood looking eastward toward the Nile.

The nervous strain of the past hour, and the seeming nearness to completion, of what he claimed to be an inherited trust, were telling upon his powers of physical endurance, and he leaned against the rough mountain side. resting for the while in that dreamy state which conjures up visions, and hears whisperings from the unseen spirits of the air. could easily fancy the soul of him, whose years of mummied privacy he had so rudely broken by his visit, standing beside him in the semi-darkness, and looking out with him toward that pile of ruins and the once sacred river which had been known to that mummied form when it and they were full of life and motion. No sooner, however, had his mental vision pictured him there, than the soul took the shape and appearance of the Israelite who came to him at the cottage on the hillside, and

with a peculiar shock his mind immediately returned to its normal condition.

For some time Hatsupa rested in this trance-like state, and then, with one more glance at the stone that closed the opening to the tomb, he cautiously wended his way to the foot of the mountain where his attendant and horse awaited him. The papyrus was hidden under his loose robe as without speaking, he mounted and the two rode away. Their course was by the same road over which they had come, back through the village, and on to the site of the great city. From that point they continued riding eastward and a little toward the south, until they reached a place where the road parted, one branch leading southwardly toward Thebes, and the other stretching off northeastwardly toward the Syrian border. Near by stood a grove of palms through which ran an illy defined pathway that led to a house of ancient and somewhat dilapidated appearance. Enter-

ing the grounds, the horses were left to the care of Abana, and Hatsupa was admitted to the house by an Egyptian woman of low stature and homely features.

- "Have you anything to report," inquired the hermit.
  - "Nothing, my master."
- "Then my expected guest has not arrived?"
- "No one appeared before the door until you came."
- "He will surely come to-night. He may have been delayed, but he will not disappoint me. I shall go to myself for a time, and when the stranger arrives, show him to the room of which I told you, and send Abana to notify me."

Hatsupa immediately retired to a small room, where he found a light burning in anticipation of his arrival.

This was now the home of the old man, and had been secured by him but a short time be-

fore, in the firm belief that his occupancy of the hillside cottage at Cairo would soon be no longer necessary. Tired and worn, he seated himself at a table on which he laid the roll, and with his eyes turned downward, seeing nothing, the hermit dreamed his waking dreams.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

#### In the Old House.

ATSUPA sat for some time in his room with his head bowed down and his thoughts busy with the events of the past few days. The work to which he had given all the years of his life seemed now about to be completed in a manner eminently satisfactory to himself, and the fulfillment of a prophecy, which he had always held to be necessary before he could be relieved of the responsibility resting upon him, was evidently near at hand. The roll that created the trust, now rested in perfect security in a box containing the jewels to which it referred, and with it the translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics in which it was written. It was sacred in the sight of the hermit, and it had lain so long in the grotto of the cottage at Cairo that common belief might

easily put it as far back as the Mahometan conquest. When, therefore, Ab-del-Rassan in his conversation with Machi, carried the line of mysterious Hatsupas back to the time of Amru, he but echoed the belief that was then prevalent among all who had any knowledge of the hermit and his habitation.

As Hatsupa sat in the dim light, his mind was altogether engrossed with the great responsibilities which rested upon him. His thoughts reverted naturally to all his previous experiences and hopes in connection with the prophecy and the trust that he now expected to see fulfilled and terminated. Under the brightness of promise with which the present was illuminated, he turned from his retrospective view to look upon a vision of the future, in which he saw himself honored and revered among all nations. A great principle had been for ages on trial. The reincarnation, as taught in the Osiris legend, was soon to assume the positiveness of a dem-

onstrated fact. To him should come the glory and honor that rightfully belonged to a faithful believer and an untiring worker; for through him would be established a truth of the greatest interest to the human race—a truth connecting far apart generations of mankind. People who had lived centuries ago were again bearing the crosses and enjoying the pleasures of earthly existence; and it would be his great privilege to so demonstrate that fact, as to establish it for all time.

It was without light, except that of the

moon, which shone brightly through the one window opening to the south, and gave a supernatural appearance to the furnishings as they sprang into bold relief, or hid away in the shadows. In the center of the room at a small table sat a man of medium stature, in the prime of life and wearing a priest's garment. His well shaped head was closely shaven, his eyes looked out with great intensity, and his firmly set mouth indicated positiveness of character; yet there was such a warmth of expression and kindly dignity ever resting on his face, as won the confidence of all who looked upon it.

As Hatsupa entered, the priest rose and returned his reverent salutation, after which, seating themselves at the table, they engaged in conversation on general topics that drifted naturally to the subject on which the hermit desired to speak.

"You think it strange, perhaps, that I should request your presence here, and pos-

sibly, after all the explanation I can make, you will fail to see the necessity for putting you to this inconvenience."

"I assure you it has been no infringement upon my time or pleasure to come to this place," replied the priest. "Your letter handed to me in Cairo by your attendant, aroused my curiosity sufficiently to make me desire a meeting with you. I am as well pleased as you, that we have this opportunity to know more of each other."

"I am much gratified to hear you speak in this manner. Your reply to my letter, written some months since, led me to think that you hardly grasped at that time, the idea I then intended to convey; and, hearing that you were in Cairo, I ventured to ask you here that I might explain more fully to you the matters then under consideration."

"I must confess that I did not entirely comprehend your words in the letter you mention. In fact the whole subject seemed quite (17)

vague and illogical to my mind. However, while I could not clearly follow your idea, I was interested sufficiently to make me pleased to find myself at this time in position to hear you further."

"I believe our interview under such circumstances will be quite satisfactory, although there are some things in connection with the subject I desire to present, that must necessarily be touched upon lightly at this time, reserving their complete explanation to some future day. And now with your permission, I shall begin.

"Years ago I met your father in Thebes and found him interested in antiquities. Like myself, he had spent much time among the old ruins and tombs, and two or three relics which he had secured, I desired very much to own. These he gladly transferred to me in exchange for some bronze medals of mine that he was anxious to possess. One of these specimens thus obtained by me, was a frag-

ment of papyrus which evidently bore upon the subject then engaging my attention, and from which I obtained much valuable information as to the time and manner in which I should complete the task to which I had set myself. For present purposes it will be sufficient to quote you only a small part of that which was written on the papyrus. The words to which I call your attention are these: 'When the Israelite of the prophecy shall appear in Cairo, go to the tomb of Ben Ammi in the mountains west of Memphis and receive the roll necessary for the completion of your work.'

"I was fortunate in finding this writing, as it filled out the uncertain parts of other inscriptions and writings that had come into my possession, bearing upon a trust which has descended to me from the days of the Pharaohs."

The priest made no reply, but kept his eyes

intently on the face of Hatsupa and mentally classed him as a dreamer.

The hermit continued:

"A tradition exists which you have doubtless heard, that in the days of the last Shepherd King, a High Priest of Thebes prophesied before a Hebrew and a Hittite maiden, saying that he and they would in the far future meet as re-incarnations, and know each other. The prophecy was based upon faith in the doctrine of Osiris, and the days are now here when their souls should be again on earth. The fulfillment of the words of the High Priest is at hand."

Hatsupa leaned forward and spoke slowly to his now attentive listener.

"I have seen the Israelite of the prophecy—I have been to the tomb of Ben Ammi—I have obtained the papyrus roll."

As he laid the roll on the table, the priest looked keenly into his face and hesitated slightly before making reply.

"But why should I be interested in any of this?"

"I will tell you why. The prophecy of the High Priest, Hotep, is more than a tradition; I have proof that it was really uttered. The great truth of the god Osiris will be established in the fulfillment of that prophecy, and the days in which it should be fulfilled are now upon us, as you can easily reckon for yourself. Few are left who profess the faith of our ancient people, but your father was one of those who are zealous in all things pertaining to the glory of the days of the Pharaohs. I doubt not you have been taught by him, and you should therefore have a strong desire to see the words of the High Priest come to pass; for in that day will be demonstrated the power of the ancient priesthood and the truth of the re-incarnation. Should it be of no interest to you?"

There was a strong emphasis upon the last

words, and pausing a moment, he resumed with a more quiet earnestness.

"I do not expect you to exhibit any enthusiasm in this great truth until you have carefully studied it. It is not my intention to attempt any argument to prove the doctrine of re-incarnation, nor do I feel that it would be fair to you, to ask attention to any discussion of the possibilities that open to the human race, if the doctrine is once established. Standing before you to-night, a stranger, I avow my supreme faith in that doctrine and the benefits mankind will receive through it. I firmly insist that the day is near when the prophecy of Hotep will be shown to have been the words of Ammon Ra, spoken through his servant, the High Priest. It matters not whether it is clear to your mind or not; the word of the great god went forth in the days of the Pharaohs, and you are involved in that which has been ordained by him to come to pass. From this hour you will begin to think

more seriously than before; your mind will become plastic and receive impressions from the mysteries that cluster about the prophecy; you will take your place and do your part in bringing about one of the greatest manifestations that any follower of Osiris could conceive."

The tone of the speaker was one of absolute certainty, and as the priest listened to the positive words, looked into the triumphlighted face, and felt how unquestionably real all this was to his host, the doctrine which he had often heard before began to assume a new character and to claim a more serious consideration. Yet he could not entirely free himself of the feeling that the hermit was in reality but an enthusiast, and he replied cautiously:

"You have presented your case with frankness and with all the assurance of a strong faith. To me, however, there is much that seems to be emotional rather than logical;

and you will pardon me if I acknowledge a slight skepticism in the matter. You have given the subject careful thought; you have followed its various points step by step, until you have reached what is to you a logical conclusion; and now you assert that I shall take my place and do my part in the coming events that will demonstrate the truth of the doctrine of re-incarnation. Be it as you say—I shall interpose no objections to any act that is not inconsistent with my priestly office; nor shall I resist any inclination that moves me to a closer study of the facts underlying your firm belief."

"Nothing will be asked of you," replied Hatsupa, "that you may not do with perfect propriety. The more you think upon what I have said, the deeper will be your interest in the closing acts connected with the prophecy and my trust."

"I repeat that I shall offer no objections to performing my part, as you are pleased to 264

call it, in developing the truth of a doctrine; but do not understand by this that I admit any belief in the trust and prophecy which you feel so positively are in your hands."

Hatsupa arose, placed his hand upon the latch of the door, and with greater depth of feeling than he had yet shown, replied:

"The gift of reading the near future is not confined to the priesthood. I look but a little way beyond the present and see, assembled in this room, four people intent on that which is of common interest to all of them. Within three of them are souls, which my prophetic eyes can see, striving to make themselves known to each other. The face of one is that of the Israelite; another wears the face and garb of a priest, even yourself. I do not ask you to believe now,—you will be compelled to believe then."

Quietly the door opened and closed—the priest was alone.

#### CHAPTER IX.

#### Machi Hears More of the Secret.

SHE next day, as the priest journeyed toward Alexandria, his thoughts reverted frequently to the interview with Hatsupa. He began to recollect indistinctly some of the things he had heard from his father of one who, in his time, was a believer in magic and a dreamer. He compared these vague memories with the theories and statements set forth by the hermit, until he reached the opinion that the two men were identical; and his better judgment prompted him to look upon the idea of a trust combined with a prophecy, as the emanation of a disordered mind. On the other hand there was a method in the movements and plans of Hatsupa, that demanded more than a passing consideration; and there was much in the idea of proving the re-incarnation of human souls,

that appealed strongly to the religious side of his nature. Thus he weighed the question before him, growing more deeply interested as its various aspects were considered; until at last he began to feel that a trust such as the hermit claimed, was not impossible; and also was disposed to look upon the development of the truth of Osiris as a work in which a priest might engage with honor.

In the evening he stopped at the public house of a little straggling village, and there met Machi, who was going to Alexandria, chiefly to see the city and to gratify his desire to know more of the land to which he was attracted by its ancient ruins and hidden mysteries. This chance meeting grew at once into the comradeship of fellow travelers; the priest taking a special interest in his new found acquaintance, and Machi being a willing listener to one who spoke interestingly of the land and its people.

Whether the priest purposely led the con-

versation to the ancient greatness of his nation and the glory of her native Pharaohs, was a question that never presented itself to the mind of Machi, for it was done so adroitly as to make the narrative seem but the natural continuation and culmination of subjects touched upon during the journey. Machi listened with a deeper interest to all that the priest said, as he dwelt eloquently upon the dynasties of the Shepherd Kings; and his thoughts were much stirred when his companion closed this part of his conversation with the remark:

"Yes, the decline under the Hyksos was humiliating, but in Aahmes came a redemption which put new life into all that was Egyptian."

At once there came to Machi the words he had heard so positively spoken by the stranger whom he had met at Bubastis, setting forth the belief in a previous existence and claiming for himself the honor of being the

re-incarnation of the last of the Hyksos rulers. Following the thought thus induced, he answered inquiringly:

"However, if the last Pharaoh of that condemned dynasty were to come upon earth now, he would find all the later glory of Egypt under her native rulers, gone forever, and the land far more desolate and humiliated than in his day."

"Very true," replied the priest, "and it is not improbable that somewhere among the striving mass of mankind, he does live and see. But he may not comprehend—he may not know that once before, he lived and had part in that glory or in that degradation."

"And yet you think he might know? I myself, have seen one who claimed to be the last Pharaoh of the Hyksos."

The priest made no reply, but regarded Machi closely. The thought came to him that here might be the Israelite whom Hatsupa

had seen in Cairo and if so, the Israelite of the prophecy.

"At Bubastis," Machi went on to say, "I met him not long since. The idea that he was the last Shepherd King, living again, had taken complete possession of him and he approached me on that subject because, in the earlier life his daughter had loved a Hebrew who returned her love. He induced me to go with him to the place where, it is said by some, the City of Avaris once stood, and there pointed out the things that he claimed were familiar to him, although he never had been on the spot in the life he was now living. And it was there, he said, where in that other life they had torn his daughter away from him, and afterward sacrificed her to the river Nile. But I could not believe; I thought he had read much and was led by a vivid imagination."

"To you, such might have been a satisfactory explanation of the case before you. To me, there is presented partial evidence of

the truth of the doctrine that all who live once upon earth, return to live again. At death they pass into the presence of Osiris and his forty-two judges, to be awarded their places and to serve their allotted time under his power, and then their souls return to dwell again in mortal form. The days are now about accomplished when all who saw those days of conflict for the regeneration of Egypt, should again appear. With them must come Apepi, and his daughter who was the Bride of the Nile. It is impossible that you should have seen the re-incarnation of the old Pharaoh?"

The priest noticed the half startled expression that passed over the face of Machi, and was more than ever convinced that the Israelite of whom Hatsupa had spoken, now stood before him.

For a moment both were silent, and then Machi answered:

"If he who claimed to recognize places, as

those he had seen in that previous life, should meet one who in that life lived as a member of his household, would he know such person beyond doubt?"

"Such a thing would be possible, but it does not necessarily follow that he would positively identify such person. Events are of more moment in some lives than are personalities. The love of self dominates the individual sometimes without his knowledge, and impressions made by great climaxes involving self-interest, become more closely a part of the soul than does the companionship of the family. But I see the point on which you desire to have my opinion, and do not hesitate to say that the re-incarnated Pharaoh. Apepi, by reason of the fateful events that clustered about his daughter, would recognize her second self, if he recognized anything as being of that previous life."

"You speak positively on this point and it is not for me to question your faith. It is all

beyond my comprehension, and you but make the words of the stranger at Bubastis more impressive. I have met one, calling himself Hatsupa, who has excited my curiosity on this subject by his intimation of some connection of myself with the story of the Bride of the Nile. You have increased my interest by your positive assertions as to the possibilities involved in the doctrine of re-incarnation, and your admission that I may have seen in the stranger, one who once sat on the throne of the Pharaohs."

The night was falling—they had entered Alexandria. The priest was now convinced that his companion was indeed the Israelite from Cairo, and pausing in the shadow of a wall, he said with great earnestness:

"I have spoken positively, as to the questions you have asked me. I speak just as certainly when I say there is a mystery which involves your life with that of the reincarnated sacrifice. The stranger at Bu
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bastis said that long ages ago the daughter of Apepi loved a Hebrew who loved her in return. Is it strange that in the new life an Israelite should be guided toward one in whom to-day the soul of the Bride exists? At Cairo, Hatsupa—at Bubastis, a stranger—here, a priest—have put in your ears parts of the story you desire to know. Each part assists in leading you toward the place and time when the story will be completed. Then will the great truth of Osiris be established—then shall the Israelite see the Bride of the Nile."

Before Machi could reply, the priest turned hastily into a narrow street, and was lost to sight.

#### CHAPTER X.

#### The Passing of Ab-del-Rassan.

LL efforts of Machi to again meet the Priest were fruitless, and it was with keen disappointment that he finally gave up the search. Another fragment of the story which Hatsupa promised he should hear had come to him through this unexpected source, and as he connected it with other experiences that had befallen him as fulfillments of the words of the hermit, he became more seriously impressed with the idea that there was indeed a mystery surrounding him, which was systematically developing through chance happenings.

The position was a peculiar one and afforded great opportunities for a wide play of imagination, so that Machi was being led gradually toward the point, where it would be possible for him to assist unconsciously in the

discovery or a secret which, at first, he thought of doubtful existence. In the vigor of his young manhood, however, he was able to easily throw aside for a time the impressions produced by his contact with the Priest, and give himself over to the enjoyment of the many new and attractive pleasures which Alexandria afforded.

Then he was suddenly confronted with a vision that affected him as neither the hermit's mystery, nor the Priest's prophecy had done. Far away from the noise, the confusion and the teeming multitudes of the great city, among the rambling by-ways of quiet Ghazzeh, the picture was set and its central figure was the Arab maiden, happy, graceful and lovable. It was a beautiful picture; it brought the sweetest of memories; he gazed upon it with intoxicating delight. It softened the glare and turmoil of the day, hallowed the thoughts of the night and led him irresistibly toward Cairo.

In the Ab-del-Rassan many house of changes had taken place since he and his niece had returned from Ghazzeh. The fullness of years were telling upon the old Arab and he could no longer hide from the loving eyes of Ayesha the infirmities that had quietly crept upon him. The business so successfully carried on for so many years had passed into other hands, the life that had once craved the activities which clustered about it, was now content to enjoy the companionship of the maiden who ministered to his wants with ready hand and loving heart. They were days of pleasant association, not without their sad reflections, and as Ab-del-Rassan accepted the gentle and gracious service of his niece, she grew more and more precious to him; while he, grandly and peacefully drawing near the end of life inspired her with increased reverence and devotion.

Returning one evening from a quiet walk

along the river side, they were surprised to find Machi awaiting them. The face of the old Arab lighted up with pleasure as he heartily welcomed him, and Ayesha felt her heart beat faster as the young Israelite looked lovingly into her eyes. Later, as they occupied the small back room that looked out into the well kept garden, Machi, at the request of Abdel-Rassan related his movements since they had separated at Ghazzeh. The sketch was fragmentary in character as he spoke of the days previous to his journey to Alexandria, but at that point the narrative assumed a connected form and became much more detailed in statement. A greater interest was at once manifest in his hearers and as he dwelt upon the words of the Priest, which had been so full of interest to him, the Arab gave him the closest attention and followed his story intently. When his narrative dealt with the statements as to the doctrine of Osiris, and the return to earth of departed souls, Ayesha lis-

tened in rapt attention; and as he went on to the declaration made by the priest that the time was now come when she, whose secret Hatsupa had promised to reveal, should be again among the living, the Arab maiden was lost to all except the words of Machi. Ab-del-Rassan saw the intense feeling that was moving her, but did not interfere. He, too, seemed gradually falling under the influence of what he had always regarded as a peculiar hallucination affecting Machi and his niece. As he listened closely to all that the Israelite had just spoken, the words the Priest had uttered brought vividly to his mind those of the stranger, who so lately had passed away making similar assertions as to a second life upon earth. The mystery which the Israelite and the maiden had long acknowledged, was beginning to enshroud the old Arab. Machi finished his story, the eyes of Ayesha looked inquiringly into those of her uncle.

"May not the Israelite know now the story of the stranger?"

"Even as my child desires," he answered. Then in a low, soft voice, as though the words were to convey sacred mysteries, she related all the particulars of the death of him who claimed to have been a re-incarnated Pharaoh, while Machi sat in silent astonishment.

For a short time after she had finished the narrative, there was no inclination on the part of either to speak. Machi was quietly connecting the words the stranger had spoken to him at Bubastis with those he had uttered in the presence of Ab-del-Rassan and his niece. Ayesha looked dreamily out of the window at the coming shade of night. The Arab seemed more nervous than usual and moved several times uneasily in his seat. Then he began in a low tone:

"I am more than interested in this succession of strange events. In the beginning I

believed nothing; then I was brought to the point where I could not explain; now I feel that there is indeed a mystery about us in which Hatsupa is taking some prominent part. But it is not for us to put ourselves against the will of God. What He has hidden, we may not ask to see. That which He wills for us, we cannot escape."

"Whatever may be about us, whatever may be in store for us," replied Machi, "does not in the least change my determination to investigate to the end. God does not intend that we shall idly await the future under such circumstances as have fallen to us."

"Perhaps the Israelite is right, and to you who are yet young, there remain many years in which to learn the meaning of that which is now beyond our knowledge. To me it will not be unfolded, for God will soon call me hence."

"Not so should you speak, my uncle," said Ayesha, quickly. "The years of your life

may yet be enough for you to know the secret of Hatsupa."

"My days are fast drawing to a close. So near does the end seem to me, that I beg to recall the promise of the Israelite to protect Ayesha in all this matter."

"I shall keep my promise faithfully; but not now would I come between Ab-del-Rassan and his niece, to deprive him of the least part of the pleasure of being her defender. If, however, the days have now come when I can strengthen the hands of my father's friend, I shall gladly show my appreciation of all his kindness to me by doing so. And when the strong arm of Ab-del-Rassan shall fail, and his words of advice no more be heard, it shall be my pleasure to ever protect his niece from danger."

"It is kind of the Israelite to say this." said Ayesha. "But, my dear uncle, let us talk no more of such things at present. Much that now disturbs us, may soon be made clear; and

many happy days may yet be in store for us. I do not feel that I am in any more danger than comes to all of us."

As she spoke, she saw a change come over the face of her uncle, and hurried to his side. The mild excitement of the evening had been more than he could bear, and he sat limply in his chair, overcome by exhaustion.

Stimulants were quickly given, and in a few minutes he revived sufficiently to join them in quiet conversation; and later he brightly bade his guest a pleasant good-night. The incident, however, was accepted as a warning against any over exertion, and from this time he kept more closely to the house, seldom taking his evening stroll.

Machi called frequently upon him, and Abdel-Rassan openly expressed the pleasure he had in these visits, at the same time mentally commenting on the manliness of his young friend. Machi in turn learned to admire the many noble traits of the Arab; but more than

this he noted the quiet, loving attention which Ayesha bestowed upon her uncle; the graceful dignity with which she invested all her meetings with himself; and his heart made instant demand that he ask the question she had so studiously prevented at Ghazzeh.

The maiden had not been unmindful of the kind manner of the Israelite toward her uncle; his delicate and unobtrusive attentions to herself; and his unassuming exhibition of a frank and manly character. Within her was revived all the warm feeling toward him that she felt when they parted in her native town, and it grew daily until at last it blossomed into pure, unselfish love.

It was the same old, sweet story, and led to the usual result; for when Machi approached her on the subject nearest his heart, and pleaded his cause purely on the ground of love and devotion to her,—she believed him. Asking only for the consent of her uncle, she promised to be the wife of the man she loved,

as soon as was becoming after Ab-del-Rassan had passed beyond the need of her further care.

It was but a few days after this that the old Arab, feeling much better than usual, proposed to walk once more by the river's brink, to see the waters bathed in the soft, royal tints of the sunset; and to look for the last time perhaps, upon the column of the Bride, the contemplation of which now aroused such unaccountable emotions. As they paused before the monument, Machi supported Ab-del-Rassan, while Ayesha moved closer to the water's Suddenly, and as though utterly unedge. conscious of any other presence, she stepped into the boat as it floated idly beside the column, and stood looking out upon the water. Her face brightened as she gazed on the beautiful scene; her eyes sparkled with delight; and the graceful pose of the body showed the perfect abandon to thoughts suggested by youth, health and enthusiasm, as she drank in

the beauty of water and sky. Looking at her from the position occupied by the others, she was pictured distinctly against the horizon, and stood like a queen of earth in worshipful adoration of the great Sun-god of the heavens. As Machi turned from Ab-del-Rassan and saw her thus, his heart beat wildly; his face twitched nervously.

He saw nothing but the vision so suddenly thrust upon him; and as he looked in silent admiration, the old Arab intently watched every change of expression, and noted the involuntary quiver of his frame.

It all occupied but a few seconds and Ayesha returned, unconscious of what had transpired, to the side of her uncle, who spoke with suppressed emotion.

"Did my son see aught that was unusual?"

"Strange,—very strange indeed is this," replied Machi.

"Let not the emotions control the judgment, my son. I see you are excited."

"Something like what I have just seen, I have witnessed before."

"It may have been a dream of long ago."
But the words of Ab del-Rassan did not come from his heart. Machi replied thoughtfully:

"I have again experienced the feeling that controlled me when I saw the hut in the field."

Ayesha looked from one to the other in bewilderment. They turned toward the house and walked in silence. As they went, Ab-del-Rassan grew weaker; he leaned more heavily on Machi for support; he held the hand of Ayesha more closely. The strain had been too severe. That night the spirit of Ab-del-Rassan took its flight.

#### CHAPTER XI.

#### Starting for the Hut.

HE evening shades were softly enveloping the city as Machi and Ayesha sat by the open window in the house of Ab-del-Rassan. Fond memories of the old Arab clustered about them as they thus looked out in silent enjoyment, and dwelt lovingly on the events of the near past. To each came the remembrance of the quiet lanes, the cooling shade and happy days that belonged to their brief association in her native village, and they were once more stirred with the strong emotion that controlled them when first their eyes met, and their hearts felt the flutterings that betokened the birth of love. With equal pleasure their minds reverted to the time when each looked into the daily life of the other as it was sweetly spent in comforting the last days of

her uncle, and again they experienced the bliss that then was theirs through the mutual acknowledgment of a love matured. An unspeakable joy possessed them; a joy which was intensified as the outer world passed gradually into the shadows of the night, and their mental vision pictured a future of unalloyed happiness.

Suddenly Ayesha laid her hand upon the arm of Machi, and, with a startled look, pointed silently toward the mountain range. Two forms, indistinctly outlined in the coming darkness, were slowly ascending the rocky slope, moving toward the grove where stood the cottage of the hermit. Involuntarily the hand of the Israelite clasped that of the maiden, as they watched half eagerly, half sorrowfully, until the two had disappeared among the trees.

"Hatsupa and his attendant!" The tone
in which these words were uttered by Machi
was subdued almost to sadness, and the silence
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that followed was one in which the dreamy, soothing effect of the love inspired thoughts of but a moment ago, was superseded by the restless, unsatisfied feeling that they were again overshadowed by the mystery which seemed to connect the life of the Israelite with that of the hermit. Their pleasurable reverie was dashed to destruction by the rude shock, and with a sigh of disappointment Ayesha lighted the lamps, while Machi frowned in antagonism to the thoughts that now crowded his brain.

"My dear Machi! I am much disturbed at having thrust upon me such thoughts as always result from meeting Hatsupa. At times I wish most sincerely that you had never heard of the secret, and yet on after consideration my better judgment rises up against such a feeling. I am sorely distressed."

"I regret that the declaration made by Hatsupa, that my life is closely connected with his story and his secret, should bring even the

shadow of annoyance to you. I am ready at once to sacrifice all my desire to understand his mysterious actions, and to willingly crush the spirit of curiosity that first led me to listen to his words. Come with me, my dear Ayesha, lighten with joy the home over which I shall place you, and let me live only for my beloved."

"Not hastily, Machi, not hastily should we move. I do not understand all that I see and hear, but such strange things have happened you lately that I am tempted to believe a part at least of what Hatsupa says. I would not, therefore, have you turn away from hearing his story, which appears to be really in process of telling. Although unpleasant thoughts thrust themselves upon me at times in connection with the mystery that surrounds the hermit, the whole matter should be closed forever, before we unite our lives in one. It may be we shall afterward look back upon it all as a piece of youthful folly, but we must not

rashly place ourselves now in a position that might make a life-long regret possible."

"I cannot well dispute what you have said, but has my loved one carefully considered all that may be involved in the effort to know Hatsupa's story?"

"Whatever might seem probable to confront us should have no weight, as against the evils that may be ours if we marry before it is told. We may find it naught but the imaginings of an old man, yet must we know his secret, and to know it you must hear his story."

"It pleases me to have you take such a view, but let me say one other thing that is now first in my thoughts and that may affect your decision. The emotions produced by the sight of the hut in the field, lead me to believe that a visit to it might prove of the greatest interest to me. I do not believe all that the stranger said to me that day; but he had spoken so positively of the Bride of the Nile—

a woman stood in the door of the hut—and to me had been promised the story and the secret. I am impelled to go again, and yet as I think of the possible sorrow that such a visit might bring upon us, I hesitate. Should I go, what will I find to be the central fact in that which shall be revealed to me there? Will it be the place or will it be the woman? Drawn by the feeling that the hut was connected with some part of my past life, may I not be led to a spot where my eyes shall look into a face—a face, my dear one, that I dimly recollect?"

Machi paused in an embarrassed manner and waited for Ayesha to speak. The questions now asked by him had never presented themselves to her in the superficial study she had given the subject, and she did not make immediate reply. When her answer came there was a firmness in the tone that left no doubt as to her sincerity.

"I would not have you forego the journey because of this thought. We must remember

that, for the present, all is suppostion—nothing has been proven. If it should be that Hatsupa is but a dreamer, then he has no story, no secret, that can be of interest to us. If what he says is true, and your life is indeed connected with the past in such manner as to produce at the hut the condition you now suggest, reason tells us that we should face that condition unflinchingly and know the hermit's secret if possible."

"Be it as you say, my dear Ayesha. Tomorrow I shall go."

"Why to-morrow? Hatsupa is again here and I doubt not will expect to see you."

"He has said that he will not see me again until the story is completed. Why, then, should I expect to gain anything by waiting? If we are determined to pursue our investigation to the end, we ought to lose no time by unnecessary delay; but, again I say, if to you it seems best to go no farther, I will cheerfully dismiss the whole matter. Think well my

love. The seeming fulfillment of some of the hermit's words should not influence us too strongly—the fear of something that is largely a creature of our emotions, must not lead to unreasonable acts."

They drew more closely together as though the thought of the uncertain future made each feel the need of the other. Softly the arms of Machi enfolded her, and for a moment of supreme bliss the maiden's head rested trustfully upon his bosom. Her words came with all the soft inflections of love and yet with all the firmness of command.

"My dear one, to me there is a fascination that holds me, in the fact that all we have learned tends to prove that there is something more which we might know. To you there must be a keener desire than mine to follow what appears to be the development of a strange story and I could not ask you to sacrifice it now. Go and see that which may be vouchsafed you, and let us continue as we



are until we know the secret, or prove it but an hallucination of Hatsupa's brain."

Early the next morning the Israelite passed out of the city on his way to the hut near Bubastia.



#### CHAPTER XIL

#### A Strange Tradition.

was a primitive looking place that Machi found when he reached the little hut, in that part of the land which had once been known as Goshen. Everything about it was stamped with marks of poverty, although of a cleanly and the character: man and woman who inhabited it, were far past the prime of life. As the Israelite approached, the man was in the little garden attached to the house, gathering enough for their frugal meal, while the woman was engaged within. The old man noticed him when he was yet some distance away, and evidently notified his wife, for she suddenly appeared in the door-way looking toward the coming visitor. Machi paused to take in the scene, while a feeling of disappointment swept over him. There was noth-

ing in the house or the people that produced in him the least emotion, nor did the landscape impress him other than as being more monotonous than that which he had left behind. To his mind came the thought that possibly the conversation of the stranger on that day when he first saw the hut, had so unconsciously worked upon him as to produce the emotion which controlled him at that time. Yet he could recall almost the exact words that were spoken, as the stranger stood beside him, and now found nothing in them to so stir him. With such thoughts as these he moved toward the house, and as he went he began to realize why he felt such indifference in regard to the hut, the woman and the surroundings. He now looked upon it all as a place that he had seen but a short time since: a place connected only with that visit when the stranger stood beside him; and this recollection of it took away all possibility of his being startled or impressed, as he had been when

his memory reflected something of a time that seemed to have been before this present life. Still he was disappointed.

Having saluted the old couple, Machi took a proffered seat on a rude stool in front of the door, and entered into conversation with them.

"Some weeks ago, I passed over the road running along to the west yonder, and noticed this place. I was told by my companion at that time that such little homes were quite common in this part of Egypt during the reign of the Pharaohs. I was interested enough to desire a closer view; and have made free to visit this place on my way to Bubastis, in order to satisfy that desire and gratify my curiosity regarding things relating to that distant past."

"I infer from your words that you are a stranger here," replied the old man as he scanned Machi carefully.

"I am. For the present my home is in

Cairo; but at that place I am little known, for I have but lately come down from Jerusalem."

"It is many years since I visited Cairo, and I am now getting too old to expect to see the city again. Yet often I have cherished the hope that I might look once more upon the face of that noble Arab, Abdel-Rassan, whom I met there. For more than a year I have not heard from him, and I feel that he is no more upon earth."

"He has indeed passed away, as one whose soul was always ready. He lived the life of one of the faithful, and his spirit has returned to God."

The old man sat silent for some time. His wife looked at him with a peculiar, puzzled expression; and Machi slowly revolved in his mind the idea of moving on to Bubastis, without spending further time in what now seemed an unprofitable undertaking. His thoughts were interrupted by the words of the old man.

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"Did you know the Arab? Have you ever spoken with him?"

"I have met him. I have conversed with him frequently. I have enjoyed his hospitality and eaten of his bread."

Again the old man sat as in deep study, while Machi, observing the interest his words had produced, awaited with some curiosity, a reply.

Lifting his head slowly and looking toward his wife who nodded approvingly, the old man began:

"You are an Israelite. Though I should be mistaken in the conclusion I have drawn, there will be no harm in my saying a few words to you on a subject in which I am deeply interested."

Pausing as though to afford opportunity for reply, he at once resumed:

"There is a tradition connected with this place, which has been handed down among the people near by, for so many years that none

can say when it was first told. Included with the tradition is a prophecy that some day an Israelite, who had known and had broken bread with an Arab would come this way, inspired solely by the desire to see the hut which then should stand upon this spot. To him the story should be told. Years ago, a hermit called Hatsupa, dwelt here; and when I came at his request to take his place, he warned me that the time could not be far off when the tradition would be told to the one who ought to hear it. I feel that you are the Israelite who fulfills the prophecy. If it pleases you to hear it, I shall gladly tell you the story; for he to whom that honor comes, shall himself be blessed in the telling."

Machi did not make immediate reply. He was somewhat startled by the unexpected turn in the conversation. It was no surprise to him that the old man should have known Ab-del-Rassan, who as a trader would meet many people from many places. The tradition of

which he spoke might be one of the very many that, to Machi, seemed to cluster about almost every locality in that mysterious land; and the intimation that money was expected as the reward for relating this story, made it quite probable that the tradition was after all, but a flimsy means of gain for these poverty stricken people. But after his great disappointment experienced on first reaching the hut, that the emotional effect which it must be confessed he expected, had not been produced; Machi now felt that unless something should appear in the proffered story as bearing on his case, the whole experiment of the visit would be a complete failure. He, therefore, began to open his purse with the intention of giving the old man a small coin, and was much surprised at being interrupted.

"I ask nothing of the Israelite. If you are the person spoken of in the prophecy connected with the tradition, then from some source which the prophecy does not reveal, I

shall receive benefit. If you are not he for whom the story is intended, then I have simply erred in judgment, and the honor I hoped to have may be reserved for one who shall come after me."

"Forgive me for that which was not intended to wrong you. You have indeed excited in me a strong desire to hear this tradition. I shall be pleased to listen."

"Far back in the time of the Pharaohs," began the old man, "this entire region of Egypt was, it is said, occupied by the Hebrews. They lived contentedly and prosperously without being molested. Then came an uprising of the people of the whole land against their Pharaoh, who was one of the Hyksos, and war swept over and beyond this spot; but the Hebrews engaged not in it, save only one. He joined the army of the Pharaoh, and fought as bravely as any for the king he loved. To him the Pharaoh awarded honors; but he went down to destruction with his

ruler, when the hosts of the rebellious ones overwhelmed those of the king. Then was the court of the Pharaohs moved far to the south -the land was again quiet-the Hebrews prospered as before. But the name of him who went out from them to fight on the king's side, was stricken off their rolls, and it was evil in the sight of their God that his name should be spoken in their assemblies. Nearly a year afterward, the Hebrew appeared suddenly in their midst and with him came his wife. She was said to be the daughter of the Pharaoh under whom he fought, and thus a greater wrong than the first had been committed by the Hebrew against his people. The two lived in a little hut in this immediate vicinity; the one where we now sit being commemorative of the spot. But his people received them not, nor would they be reconciled to have them among their habitations. it happened that on one of their assembly days, when all were together, there came this He-(20)805

brew, who, standing in their midst, addressed them:

'I, indeed, went out from among you to fight for Pharaoh, when you were unwilling to put yourselves on his side. I afterward married the daughter of that Pharaoh, when ye looked upon such a thing as evil. But my first act was inspired by my love toward our great deliverer and protector; my second was not a leaving my people to serve the strange gods of another nation, but I have brought one more into the fold of Abraham's descendants. This have I said to justify myself, and now I go away. But you have performed all your acts for the love of gain,-for the hope of pleasure, and not because you loved your God, to walk with him. And it has been given me to see that in the coming years, you shall be oppressed and down-trodden, in that you have forgotten the God of your fathers.'

"Then the Hebrew went away, and in after

years came all the troublous days for his people, even as he had said.

"After he had departed, there came one day a priest of Egypt inquiring for him; and hearing that he had been driven away,—both he and his wife,—the priest went to the hut wherein they had dwelt, and with great earnestness prayed unto his god that the Hebrew might live in peace and quiet, and that he might return to that spot and be blessed, in the days when Osiris should have his truth established."

Turning his eyes fully upon the face of Machi, the old man continued with great solemnity:

"The days are accomplished when they who dwelt in the land then, should be again upon the earth. This hut marks closely the spot where the Hebrew and his wife abode, and here shall he some day come again. To-day I look upon an Israelite, who has broken bread with Ab-del-Rassan, an Arab, seeking this

place because he is interested in the past of the locality. You have fulfilled all the requirements of the prophecy—I have told you the tradition."

A silence fell upon them which was broken by Machi:

"And you believe the story you have told?"

"Why should not I believe it? There are just as strange things happening daily as that this be true. The difference is, we know not of them. But you have heard that which I felt I should say, and I leave all else to Allah."

"The story has claimed my closest attention; and whether I am the Israelite who should receive it or not, I thank you for having told it."

As Machi hastened toward Bubastis, he became more and more convinced that the tradition was a part of that story with which his life was connected; and as he went over the old man's words again, he could draw but one conclusion.

If the Hebrew of the tradition represented him in his previous life, then he and the daughter of Pharaoh had dwelt as man and wife in that far distant past, on the spot where the hut now stood. The thought staggered him—he walked on as in a dream.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

From Bubastis to Cairo.

RRIVING at Bubastis, Machi was quite surprised to meet the priest, with whom he had journeyed to Alexandria.

There was mutual pleasure in again coming together, and they were soon engaged in friendly conversation, in the course of which the priest related somewhat of his present movements. He was going down to a place near the ruins of Memphis, and had, for reasons which he might not now disclose, turned from the direct course in order to spend a short time in Bubastis. His object having been accomplished, he was now at liberty to move on whenever it should suit him, and he contemplated leaving the next day. The easy and graceful manner of the priest was charming to Machi, and removed all feeling of formality and restraint. Naturally his mind re-

verted to the previous meeting which had terminated so suddenly and unsatisfactorily; and he could not resist the temptation to refer to it.

"In meeting you at this time, a wish that I have made often since I saw you before, has been granted. It was a great disappointment to me when you so suddenly departed, and my efforts to find you proved futile."

The priest smiled as he replied:

"No doubt my leave taking was lacking in courtesy to you, as well as tending to detract from my own dignity; but there are times when the important duties of life overshadow its social formalities, and that was one of those occasions to me."

"It probably was selfish on my part to expect to detain you in order to question you further on the things of which we were then speaking; but, the words seemed of sufficient importance to justify whatever of selfishness I may have exhibited."

"I do not in the least condemn your thoughts or actions at that time, for in truth, that meeting was of vital importance in the solving of a peculiar problem, in which both you and I are deeply concerned."

"If you are of such an opinion, then I shall feel at liberty to make some inquiries, that for many weeks have waited an answer."

The priest held up his hand warningly and said pleasantly:

"Do not think that because the problem in which we are mutually interested, made our previous meeting an important one, we may now expect satisfactory answers to all the questions which might arise in connection with it. There are some things of which I am cognizant, that for the present must be hidden from you; and there are parts of the solution in your possession that I do not know. Hatsupa alone seems to have the key to the whole matter, and believes himself to be administer-

ing a trust, while at the same time developing a proof of an old Egyptian doctrine."

"But I cannot believe that this trust and this doctrine are things that pertain in any way to my life. My desire to know something of a story that is connected with the sacrifice of the Nile could not be gratified by a fulfillment of trusts or an establishment of doctrines."

"Of that you must not be too sure. You recollect telling me the story of one who claimed to have once been Apepi, the last Pharaoh of the Hyksos. From Hatsupa I have heard the words reported to have been uttered by this same person at his death in Cairo. They are in perfect harmony with the theory and expectation of the hermit in the performance of his double duty."

"Your words make me feel that I am more deeply involved than I expected, in what you are pleased to call a problem. I am also inclined to believe that you have more knowl-

edge of it all than you have yet admitted May I ask if you are aware that I have just come from the hut of an old man but a short distance from this place!"

"I have reason other than your statement, to believe that you have visited such a hut."

Machi was a little disturbed at this reply, which seemed to indicate some occult power, but remembering that there had been no secrecy as to his visit to Bubastis, he became less agitated, and replied:

"Perhaps you may know also the tradition the old man relates."

"I do not know so much as that he relates a tradition, except by inference from your words. You should not confound that which may be logically supposed, with that which borders on the supernatural. Many events are the sequences of other events, and having a knowledge of the personal characteristics of one whose past acts are known, a fairly correct surmise may be made of his future acts along

the same lines. But this does not by any means imply omniscience. However, let us dismiss this part of our subject and take up that which it seems to me promises something definite as to Hatsupa and his work. Some time since, he invited me to visit him at his home, and I am now on my way thither. have seen the place, which is large and roomy, though sadly in need of repair, and it would please me to have you go with me. I am very sure you will be quite welcome,—that you will be much interested in all that you may see and hear, and that it will afford us an opportuity we cannot consistently let pass. I am confident that the development of Hatsupa's plans will be hastened by such a move on our part. and thus we shall the sooner know whether his pretended trust and prophecy are the fancies of an old man, or are in truth, startling realities. You cannot afford to remain away, if you feel the interest which your previous acts and words would imply."

and the priest. 5 such as to make hi in the work of the ho of high standing, pleasing address, wh had part in the story. made known. Machi upon the priest as a c in attempting to unra than as a co-worker with preconcerted end, and i ter were correct, an inte in such company, would factory and far reachi were not present. And the hermit and the pi against him, the only re ceive, was still -

was everything to gain and nothing to be lost by accepting the invitation.

The next morning the two left Bubastis together, Machi with all the intensity of eager youth looking forward to the fulfillment of Hatsupa's promise, and the priest serenely waiting, yet hardly daring to hope for a demonstration of the truth of the doctrine connected with Osiris. Several attempts on the part of Machi to elicit something more about the subject from his companion, were pleasantly parried and with a quiet yet positive attitude against all that had seemed to interest him before, the priest, with graceful tact, drew on his knowledge of history, astrology and religion to entertain his companion.

The situation seemed unique to the Israelite. He tried in vain to reconcile the manifest ability of the priest to dominate the hermit, with his perfect acquiescence in all Hatsupa's suggestions and mysterious movements.

At length the conversation flagged—long

stretches of the road were passed in silence, and they neared the old house where the priest had first met Hatsupa.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### Ayesha and the Hermit.

NE morning, soon after Machi had left Cairo, Ayesha was sitting in the little back room overlooking the garden, her mind occupied with thoughts of the Israelite and the secret he was to hear from Hatsupa. Notwithstanding her positive assertions as Machi bade her adieu upon his departure for Bubastis, she frequently felt that her life would be far more enjoyable were it not for this mysterious story of the hermit, which in her present mood, she was sorely tempted to look upon as the chimera of a disordered brain. As she sat thus absorbed, she was surprised by the arrival of a messenger, who brought a sealed package addressed to her, which she quickly opened and read:

"My beloved Ayesha, light of my soul! Be not alarmed at this writing. I have again

met my priest of whom I told you. We are now journeying together to the home of Hatsupa, south of Cairo, on the road from Bubastis to Memphis. Everything points to the telling of the secret. Oh, that the pride of my life were with me!

Machi."

When she read this brief note, she was greatly perplexed, and immediately many questions presented themselves for reply. What had Machi learned at the hut? Where and how had he met the priest? Why should he go with him to Hatsupa? What new developments had inspired the hope of hearing the secret at this time? The more she thought about these new conditions that now surrounded the situation, the more disturbed she became; and a strong desire to be with the Israelite began to manifest itself. Without any reason that she could assign, there came over her the feeling that had so often seized

her when she first met the hermit—the feeling that in some way she should warn Machi against him. Arousing herself, she shook off this unpleasant thought, only to find herself equally agitated in an effort to solve the mystery of the parchment hieroglyphic, or in seeking explanation of some other of the many incidents and expressions that met her at every turn, as she dwelt upon her connection with the hermit, through Machi.

She walked to the window and looked out upon the flowers and shrubbery, that she might quiet the wild thoughts which ran through her brain. Her eyes wandered to many objects of interest; she raised her head and looked out beyond the confines of the garden; she gazed far off through the open country toward Memphis. All that so oppressed her before, now vanished gradually, and in a quiet, restful state, she listlessly watched the carts on the streets near by, or dreamily studied the moving figures on the

distant road. Insidiously, however, the desire to join the Israelite began again to possess her. Quietly but persistently it crept over her, without ruffling in the least her now placid mood, gaining more strength with each moment that passed, until finally she turned away with the positive expression:

"I will go at once to the hermit's home."

The faithful old servant looked at Ayesha in astonishment as she briefly told her to prepare for the journey.

"Does my mistress know the place to which she would go?"

"I do not. But the road leading south from here, must join the one running from Memphis toward the northeast. At that point we shall be near the house, and can inquire."

She noticed the hesitancy of her prudent attendant and added:

"Is there any reason why we may not go?"

"Since my mistress asks of me, I may speak.
Why should the journey be made? What has

brought such a thought to your mind? Your pleasure is always mine, and I stand ready ever to comply with your wishes; but it is not like my mistress to do this."

A little while Ayesha looked at the floor and was silent; then lifting her head, she spoke slowly:

"To you I could give no reason that would satisfy. I understand your position as the matter comes so unexpectedly before you, and seems to be so at variance with other acts of mine; but I must ask you to go with me without explanation. There is some unseen power calling me—I am firmly convinced that I should go—let us depart at once."

Later on, a thin cloud of dust moving down the road, marked the course in which Ayesha and her servant were riding. Neither cared to speak as they traveled with downcast eyes, each busy with her own thoughts, until a sharp turn at the corner of a villa wall, brought

them face to face with Hatsupa. The hermit seemed greatly surprised at this meeting, and stood by the way-side after his salutations, awaiting such address as the Arab maiden might see fit to make. She spoke in a tone and with an inflection that indicated her unusual mood.

"Does not Hatsupa know that visitors expect him at his house?"

"How should he know that the niece of Abdel-Rassan intended to so honor him?"

She looked at him closely to learn if possible whether this reply were the true expression of his understanding of her question; but could not read the solemn face before her

"I did not refer to myself as your visitor."

"The maiden speaks in riddles. Pray explain."

"You should this night be at your dwelling place near Memphis. The Israelite is drawing near it, and with him rides a priest."

The old hermit could not entirely conceal

the agitated expression these words produced, but quickly recovering, he replied:

"How know you this?"

"You have your secrets, I also have mine. If you but interest yourself sufficiently, you will find what I have said is true."

"I shall prove my interest in that which you have told me, by allowing your words to guide me. As soon as it is possible, I shall rejoin you, and, with your permission, accompany you to the place where I am expected."

Standing in the grove on the mountain side, Abana related to Hatsupa that he had just returned from the road lying to the east and had seen the priest and Machi journeying toward Memphis. This report, which the hermit had been expecting, led to immediate preparations for their departure from Cario, and soon Hatsupa rode out along the way Ayesha had taken. There was an expression of satisfaction upon his face, as he realized that the

meeting between Machi and himself, to which he had looked forward with high expectations, was soon to take place, and this pleasurable feeling was intensified as it became evident that the Arab maiden also was to be present, without any effort on his part to persuade her to such a course. Why she should now be traveling to the place of meeting, and how she obtained knowledge that the Israelite and the priest were on their way to his home, were questions he could by no means answer, and he finally dismissed them from his thoughts.

Riding somewhat rapidly, the hermit gained constantly on those ahead, until at last they all journeyed together under the afternoon sun. The conversation ran upon general lines with frequent intervals of silence, during which Ayesha found herself falling again under the influence that had heretofore led her to encourage Machi in thoroughly investigating the claims of Hatsupa. She calmly reviewed all that had befallen the Israelite in seeming

fulfillment of the promise that he should know the secret of the Bride; she dwelt seriously on the indications that she also would be involved, if only through her relations with Machi, in the mystery which hovered about the hermit and his acts.

The day waned—the sun disappeared under a mantle of brilliant colors—the moon rose softly in the eastern sky.

#### CHAPTER XV.

#### Mysteries of the Moonlight.

the foliage and laid like a silver lake across the fields, as the priest and Machi drew near the house of Hatsupa. A light breeze caused the shadows to flit like uneasy spirits along the road and made the travelers less inclined to break the silence that had fallen upon them. The place was entirely unknown to the Israelite, and as he moved along beside his quiet companion, his thoughts took a solemn, expectant coloring, in anticipation of the developments that he had come to believe would soon take place, under the manipulation of the hermit.

Suddenly there appeared three forms moving rapidly along, a short distance away on their right, and toward the old house now dimly outlined in the grove a little farther on. The

roads, on which they and the newly discovered party were traveling, converged rapidly, thereby drawing all nearer together, until in a few minutes, Hatsupa, Ayesha and her servant stood in the high-way with the priest and Machi.

This meeting was a complete surprise to the Israelite and the priest, but no attempt was made at anything more than the briefest explanations, as all felt that the house would soon be reached, and in-doors everything could be discussed much more satisfactorily. With only a short halt, therefore, the company again moved forward. All were now on foot at the request of Hatsupa, and the horses on which the journey had been made were placed in charge of Abana. Riding rapidly from Cairo, he had long since reached the old house, and by previous arrangement awaited here the coming of the others. The hermit and the priest walked a little in advance, and the former spoke rapidly, in a low tone:

"Now is the time and here the place for you to begin to perform the part which belongs to you. All that I have hoped for has been granted me, and I am confident I shall soon lay down the responsibility of the trust which has descended to me."

"I have said before," replied the priest, "that I have no interest in the trust you claim to be administering. The doctrine of the re-incarnation appeals to me in my priestly position, and I enter into all this to satisfy myself as to whether you can demonstrate its truth. All that I can consistently do in that direction, I shall feel it my duty to perform."

"I cannot ask more of you, and I assure you that I shall be guided always by a sense of propriety."

They had reached a point in the road, where it was covered in deep shadow; while off to the right a small plot of ground, partly surrounded by undergrowth, lay in the moonlight. Near its center a pile of stones arose

like the ruins of some small structure; and pointing toward this, Hatsupa said:

"Move slowly toward the ruins yonder. Do not look back; and as you go, note the surroundings. Put yourself in a passive mood, that your receptive powers may not be diminished in the least; allow your imagination to suggest to you without hindrance. Do that which occurs to you to do—say those things which, under the circumstances that may arise, seem best to say. I am satisfied that even now, you feel the influence of a mysterious power leading you on to this work. Go!"

Hatsupa joined the others on the road and the priest moved slowly out of the deep shadow into the soft moonlight, toward the stony ruins. In silence the hermit and the Israelite stood side by side, while a few paces distant the Arab servant held the hand of Ayesha. All the emotional side of Machi was now thoroughly awakened, and he felt a keen interest in every movement, as his thoughts

ran tumultuously. There was a firm conviction that he should be with his late travelling companion, now moving away from them. Already the priest had told him that the mystery which surrounded Hatsupa and his work concerned them both, and that in the completion of that work, each would have equal interest. Even now there might occur to the priest, that which would be of essential importance to himself. The more he thought of it, the stronger became the inclination to follow him; until at last, feeling that Hatsupa would oppose him if he disapproved the action, Machi hesitatingly moved a few paces toward the priest. Then he paused. Had Ayesha moved or was it but an illusion? Again he started slowly out from the road to the field, and again it seemed to him that Ayesha made a motion as though to follow him. He stood a moment looking at her. She put aside the servant's hand and approached him.

"If you go, I should not be left. My own life, as well as yours, has part in these works of the hermit; and I feel that my place is with you when you go to the priest. Permit it to be so."

Machi made no reply, but taking her hand in his, they moved together across the field toward the ruins.

Hatsupa and the Arab servant looked upon it all in silence. To the old woman, the whole proceeding was entirely beyond comprehension, and she doubted much if any good could come to her mistress, through the strange acts that had followed her acquaintance with Machi and the hermit. To Hatsupa the events now transpiring were of the utmost importance, and his mind was filled with the impressiveness of the truth he felt was about to be established. While his attitude and facial expression betrayed nothing of eagerness or excitement, his heart beat rapidly and his eyes

were never removed from the group moving silently away.

But over the priest, Machi and Ayesha there rushed a tumult of emotions that cannot be described. They were perfectly conscious of every detail of that which was now taking place. All about them bore its usual appearance and there was no feeling of the supernatural attached to their movements or their surroundings. Whatever should be the outcome, they were now acting without hindrance or suggestion—of their own will. Yet thev were aware that however much they might assume an independence of thought and action. there was, nevertheless, something out of the ordinary in that which was transpiring. priest, without any outward suggestion, and with no feeling of inconsistency, had easily associated the stone ruins with the idea of an altar. An impression that he had seen once before, a place similar to this, grew rapidly into a belief that he had been at one time.

either in the far past or in some forgotten dream, upon this very spot, and before this very altar that now stood clearly defined in the moonlight.

And as Machi and the maiden followed the strong, well-knit frame that walked before them, realizing that they were in full possession of all their faculties, there crept over them the conviction that the sensations of these moments had been theirs to experience once before. The invisible power which now drew them after the priest, and the sense of his superiority that swayed them, were vaguely familiar and seemed properly to belong to their present environment.

To none of the three was there any inclination to think that they were other than themselves; and yet to all of them came the controlling belief that the place was not new to them, and the conditions were such as should be found there.

There was no surprise, therefore, on the

face of the priest as he paused near the ruins, and turning about, found Machi and Ayesha standing before him. The Arab maiden, looking up into his face, the face of a stranger, saw only the benign countenance which bespoke the honesty of purpose and kindliness of heart that dwelt in the man, and knew it. She could not suppress the thought that long ago she had seen this same face under the same or similar conditions.

The priest spoke:

"Why have you followed me here? Did Hatsupa suggest it?"

"Hatsupa said nothing," replied Machi.
"Of my own will I came and brought her who is all to me."

"And I," said Ayesha, "came freely also, although the Israelite led me."

The priest stood with his eyes fixed on the ground, and so completely absorbed as to seem oblivious to the presence of the others. The

Israelite and the maiden were likewise silent, as a feeling of awe slowly took possession of them.

Looking up into the faces of Machi and Ayesha, the priest said:

"A strange thing has happened to us. We stand as it were on the borderland of a forgotten past, looking back with longing hearts. We see through the things now about us, the faint outline of things we knew so long ago that they could not have been in this life."

Machi replied with much emotion:

"I tremble as I accept the truth of what you have said; and dare not allow my thoughts their widest range. Before my mind are visions that stir my soul to the utmost, and make me believe that we are lending aid to Hatsupa in the fulfillment of prophecy. A secret he has promised I should know seems now disclosing itself—the soul of one whom you have said I should meet, seems near. As I stand here, I am transported to scenes that (22)

can only belong to a time which I cannot remember—scenes that have once been mine to enjoy."

"The Israelite speaks for me also. Not in my present life have I stood in this place, yet my inmost soul faintly recognizes it and builds upon it. These ruins have become to me an altar. Before it I stood, in that life which the soul now remembers, and with me a man and a woman who had part in my life."

As the priest uttered these words, Ayesha was unable to control herself longer, and spoke earnestly:

"It is not for the daughter of an Arab to say whether Egyptian prophecy is being fulfilled or not. The niece of Ab-del-Rassan does not understand Hatsupa; she has not believed in the truth of Osiris. But this is now a certainty to me. Once before, I came to a place like this, with one who would have laid down his life for me. Then, there stood before me a priest who looked deep into my soul

with a father's love. Osiris may not be true; Hatsupa may have no secret to tell; but in this place I am in some way connected with a priest and an Israelite whom I knew long,—long ago."

Her whole soul had gone into her words, and as she finished she took the hand of Machi and turned aside from the priest, who passed to the stony ruins and stood before them as before an altar, with his face slightly upturned like one in silent prayer.

As the Israelite and the maiden earnestly spoke of the emotions that had so overcome them, they turned toward the priest standing before the altar of stones, his face lightened by the moon's rays as he gazed far off into the night. For an instant each was distinctly startled. Perhaps the nervous strain was getting too severe and the cumulative force of their late experiences was gaining undue control; or could it have been that a subtle influence crept through the brain, softened the

heart and opened up a past farther back than any we commonly recognize—a previous self for a moment dominating the present. Whatever might have been the cause for their action at this time, when they caught sight of the upturned face before the ruins, they uttered as with one voice, in a tone of reverential awe, "It is he," and stood with their eyes fixed eagerly upon the priest.

He turned slowly and came toward them. Some mysterious spell seemed to fall upon them, and as they moved away to join those in the road, the voice of the priest was heard reverently saying:

"After the years spent with Osiris, the souls of the dead return to earth. The souls in us met here together in that other life."

#### CHAPTER XVI.

#### The Bride of the Nile.

>HE room in which they gathered at the house of Hatsupa, was the one where the priest and the hermit had previously met, and as they entered, Machi and Ayesha recognized with a start of surprise the hieroglyphic and on the door. Lamps of various designs shed a soft yet bright light about the room, which seemed prepared for their occupancy, as a table surrounded by chairs, had been placed in the center, while a smaller table on which were placed a box and a bag, stood near by. Hatsupa quietly seated his guests, placing the priest at one end of the table, with Ayesha and Machi facing each other at the sides, while he occupied the end opposite the priest.

Although there was an outward calmness maintained by all, it was evident that a great

nervous strain underlaid the quiet exterior, as they took the seats assigned them, and waited for Hatsupa to speak.

"This night," he said, "will close a trust which I have inherited from my ancestors, who first assumed it in the days of the Pharaohs. This night will see the words of prophecy fulfilled, which were spoken by the Hight Priest Hotep, whose name is on the door and on the parchments held by the Arab maiden and the Israelite.

"This night also, the Israelite shall hear the secret of the Bride of the Nile.

"Strange circumstances have combined to bring us together here, but there have been no chance happenings. All the events, leading to this meeting to-night, were but steps that led naturally to a recognition of a previous existence upon earth, and of the relation you then bore each other. You are now satisfied that the different events and narratives which have come to you, were not such as might lie

in my power to plan and execute; you are convinced that you have lived before in some long gone past; and it remains for me to advance one step farther, that you may know the parts you played in that past existence."

Hatsupa paused and looked toward the priest as though expecting his approval or denial of the statement made.

"We have indeed been convinced," said the priest, "that we have known each other at some time, so far distant that it seems a previous existence. It is possible also that you may show us whom we were in those days. We should not feel, however, at this time that we are characters in some psychological mystery prepared for us alone, for such is not true. Many persons before us, have felt at different times and under certain conditions, the same emotions that have been experienced by us individually, with reference to the seeming familiarity of strange persons and

places. Many more to come after us will recognize, as each of us has done, a likeness in the things about them to something dimly remembered, and will question with themselves as to whether they have not been upon earth in an existence far back in the past. To all these the belief rests upon nothing more substantial than vague remembrances and is never distinct, never satisfying. They are individual experiences and are never carefully examined, nor is any attempt made to carry them to a logical conclusion by co-operation. This would have been our condition had not Hatsupa, in the firm belief of a trust devolving upon him, and of a prophecy to be fulfilled, made it possible for us to have his powerful assistance, in verifying our belief. What would otherwise have remained to us an incomprehensible emotional experience. seems destined to be developed into a satisfying and far reaching truth. I am prepared to hear further."

"The priest speaks truly in all this and I proceed in full faith that we shall soon acknowledge as truth, that which has already become to us more than a mere theory. From the time I inherited my trust, there were many things pointing to its termination in me. To me was granted a part of the priestly gift of prophecy, that I might see into the near future. The meaning of secret marks and hieroglyphics was not hidden from me, and I was able to master such rolls of writing as had a bearing upon my work. I took up my task earnestly, and for years made preparation for the end which is now at hand. I ask the priest to read this writing, which will show the nature of the trust that my ancestor assumed."

Hatsupa took from the box a papyrus roll and handed it to the priest. The writing was in Egyptian hieroglyphics, with the translation as made by Hatsupa; and the priest read in a clear, well modulated voice:

"As I sat by my window, the High Priest drew near to me. A box of jewels, rare and of great value, he placed before me and said: 'These once belonged to the Hittite maiden, who was chosen Bride of the Nile. I, Hotep, desire to place them in trust with you. After the years with Osiris have been accomplished, the soul of the Hittite maiden, the soul of Ben Ammi, the Hebrew who loved her, and the soul of Hotep, even myself, shall come again to the spot where Aahmes once camped near Memphis. Then shall the jewels, held in trust, be returned to her in whom dwells the soul of the Hittite maiden. It is the will of Ammon Ra that you undertake this for the sake of the truth of Osiris. But in so doing, thy name shall pass away, for to each one who succeeds to this trust, the name Hatsupa shall be given.' As the High Priest spoke to me, his soft voice soothed me; his loving manner inclined me toward him; his dark eyes looked into my soul and led me captive to his

will. I bowed before his supreme confidence in me, and accepted the trust with which he honored me.

#### KAKAN OF THERES."

As the priest read these words impressively, his eyes lighted with interest, but his face was grave with solemn thought. Machi and Ayesha eagerly listening, and looking intently at him, caught the expression that stamped his countenance and knew that face again, even as they had known it but a short time since at the stony ruins in the moonlight.

Hatsupa again spoke:

"To-night as we came to this house, we passed the place at which, it is believed by many, Aahmes camped on his return march to Thebes. You were not aware of that fact, nor had anything been said to influence your minds, when you turned from the road into the field. At the stone ruins, you were on the ground where the altar stood in the camp

of Aahmes centuries ago. Then it was you felt the working of some powerful unseen force, although your minds were perfectly clear and your movements absolutely free. A mysterious atmosphere hovered about you and a belief that the scene was partly familiar constantly asserted itself. There came a consciousness of an acquaintance that drew you one toward the other, as friends of another life."

As the hermit thus briefly and earnestly pictured their thoughts and feelings during that meeting in the open field, they were again exalted to that supernal state, in which they had seen, through the moonlight surroundings, far back into a life that was once theirs to enjoy. Deep silence reigned. Then raising his hand slowly toward them, Hatsupa continued with an intensity of feeling that had never before characterized any of his utterances.

"This night the prophecy, made by Hotep 348

to my ancestor, Kakan, has been fulfilled, and the soul of Ben Ammi, the soul of the Hittite maiden, and the soul of the High Priest, Hotep, met on the spot designated. They met as the Israelite, the Arab maiden, and the priest now present."

Majestically the old hermit stood before them—with bated breath the others sat, in hardly controlled excitement; and there was no movement until Hatsupa turned to the small table and took from the bag upon it a package loosely wrapped.

Resuming his position, he again began:

"You already feel that the words I have just spoken cannot be put aside as the vain utterances of an enthusiast. Let me proceed further. To all that I have said, and all that you have experienced in regard to your previous existence, I now desire to add material proof. The priest is aware that the first encasement of the ancient Egyptian body, when being prepared for burial was of

pasteboard. It was molded to the shape of the body and that part which covered the face was painted in the likeness of the person enclosed. I have here the pasteboard covering, taken from the face of a mummy, resting in his tomb on the hillside, west of the ruins of Memphis. It is a silent witness and yet it shall speak more loudly to you than any words. Behold, the face of Ben Ammi, the Hebrew lover of the Hittite maiden!"

As Hatsupa spoke, he removed the wrapping and held up the pasteboard, that all might plainly see. A solemn hush, broken only by suppressed breathing, fell upon the room.

Machi sat as though carved from marble, his eyes fixed staringly upon the painted pasteboard, his face pale with excitement and his breath coming quickly. Ayesha and the priest looked at Machi and then at the face held by Hatsupa, eagerly scanning the features of the one and the painted expression

of the other. The voice of the priest—almost a whisper,—broke the silence:

"The face of Machi is the face of Ben Ammi."

This identification of Machi with the Hebrew gave strength to the incipient belief in the minds of the others, as to their own identity, while to Hatsupa it was so thoroughly convincing, that he proceeded at once to the termination of his trust. Again opening the box which held the roll the priest had read, he took from it the brilliant and costly jewels which had once graced the daughter of Apepi, and approaching Ayesha with solemn dignity, he clasped them about her throat and arms.

Then taking his place at the end of the table, he produced the papyrus roll which he had taken from the tomb of Ben Ammi, and began:

"The prophecy is fulfilled—my trust is completed. It only remains for the Israelite

to hear the secret of the Bride of the Nile. This roll also I obtained from the tomb of the Hebrew, on the hills west of Memphis and as I have translated it, so I shall read it:

'I, Ben Ammi, make this writing to be buried with me in the day when I shall be gathered to my fathers. I shall carry it to my God as a testimony for Hotep, the High Priest at Thebes. Brave and true is his heart, soft are his words, and his deeds rise up to bless him. In the day when the Hittite maiden was chosen for the sacrifice, my heart was as lead and my eyes wept bitter tears. She was fairer to me than any princess; my heart laid at her feet. But Aahmes hardened his heart against her, and the Queen was not able to save her. Then it was that Hotep stood for her, but held his peace. Daily did he leave me during the temple service, to hide himself from the sight of those about him. And when the time came to go down the river to the place of sacrifice, his step was light, his

face was calm and he took the Hittite into his boat with great respect. The Queen had said to the Hittite, whatsoever Hotep may tell you to do, that do ye; and the maiden had promised the Queen to obey. The day came at last, when On was filled with the multitude, and my beloved stood before them as the Bride of the Nile, ready to be sacrificed to the sacred river. Oft had they seen her standing thus as the boats came down the stream from Thebes, and they knew her: and their hearts went out to her for her beauty. But Hotep had set himself to save her, and at Thebes, he had made an image in wax, which was her very likeness. All her beauty of form and fearless expression put he into the image, and made it like unto her as she appeared in the boat descending the river. So when the people looked upon the Bride at On, and knew it to be the Hittite, it was but the image Hotep had made. The waxen figure went down into (23)353

the waters, but the Hittite maiden was hidden in the boat. Thus Hotep saved her for me, even for Ben Ammi, the Hebrew. Nebka took us to his villa, and after the days of the festival we dwelt in our own hut in the land of Goshen. But my people were against me, and we returned to Nebka and dwelt with him near Memphis. Hotep came often to see us, but we went not to Thebes. Nevertheless Aahmes was glad when he found the Hittite had been saved, and Ne-fert-ari, the Queen, was gracious unto us. Blessed be Hotep forever.''

When Hatsupa closed his reading of the roll, Ayesha impulsively arose, and with all the dignity of one born to royalty, stood majestically before the hermit.

The soft, bright light fell over her, perfectly outlining every curve of her graceful figure, and casting a faint halo around the dark hair that partly framed her animated face. The rich jewels, just presented to her,

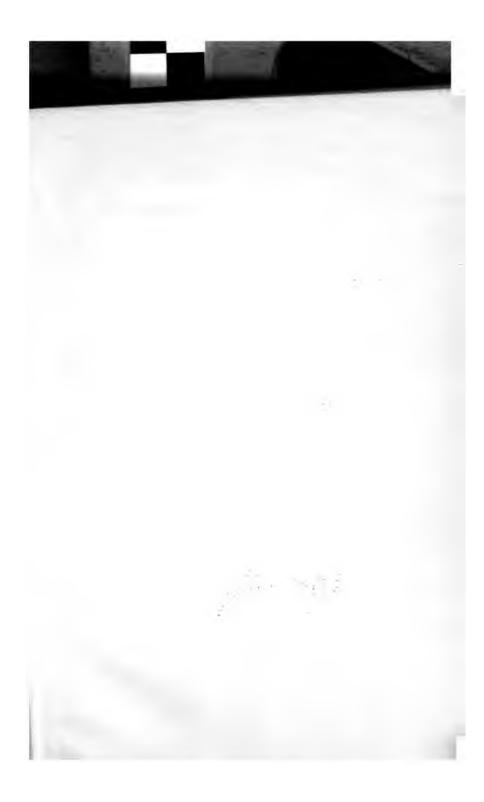
sparkled at her throat in scintillations of ever changing color, her eyes, fixed upon the entranced Hatsupa, were ablaze with the dazzling brilliancy born of the excitement that now swayed her. With body inclined slightly forward, her firm lips parted by the faintest line, every expression of her countenance reflecting the intensity of feeling that controlled her, she was the central figure in a tableau of thrilling interest.

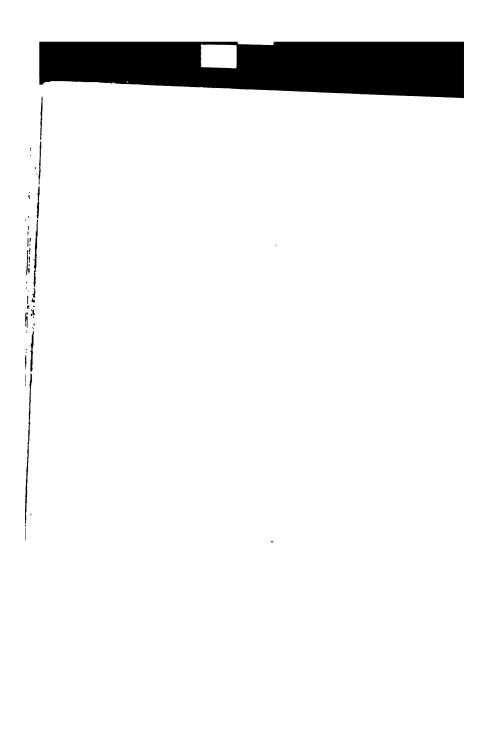
Involuntarily the priest and Machi sprang to their feet, gazing in astonishment upon the picture thus presented. As they looked, the Arab maiden seemed gradually to be fading away without losing her identity. It was she, and yet it was another, who was now drawing them toward her with a charming attractiveness which they did not care to resist. A curtain seemed to have been parted, disclosing a scene far,—far back—a scene which grew more and more familiar to them as they contemplated it with ever-increasing delight.

The narrow confines of the room broadened into a wide expanse of varied landscape,—the soft light of the lamps was lost in the bright rays of a glorious morning sun—the figure that now fascinated them seemed to float beside them as on the bosom of restless waters. Then it was that, looking out through the eyes of the priest and Machi, the souls of Hotep and Ben Ammi recognized the soul that dwelt in the Arab maiden,—saw in Ayesha the Hittite maiden,—the daughter of Apepi—and with an ecstacy of adoration saluted her as the Bride of the Nile.

THE END.









47/8/76

